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INTRODUCTION

IF Plutarch did not, as M. Brunetière somewhat fancifully asserts, "make the French Revolution," his influence upon the generation of Frenchmen that made it was nevertheless such as to give point and color of truth to the epigram. It was so largely to the old Greek biographer that the typical mind of the epoch owed its distinctive tinge and ply that the Revolution, in so far as it reflected the intellectual peculiarities of the day, may in a sense be said to have been his work. The import of M. Brunetière's observation is nowhere so clearly illustrated as in the history of the celebrated group of political dreamers whose central figure was the author of the following Memoir. It was from Plutarch's pages that the Girondins drew that extraordinary enthusiasm for the republics of classic antiquity which was perhaps their most striking characteristic as a party;

and Madame Roland was the soul of the Gironde. To view her as essentially the disciple of Plutarch, bent through life on enacting a Plutarchian rôle, and maintaining through life a more or less Plutarchian pose, is to possess the master-key to her career, and to understand why there was in that career always a certain tinge or suggestion of the theatrical, even where her bearing was finest. In her memoirs Madame Roland relates how the book which so deeply affected her life first fell into her hands.[1]

"Plutarch," she adds, "seemed to be exactly the food that suited my mind. I shall never forget the Lent of 1763, at which time I was nine years of age, when I carried it to church instead of my prayer-book. From that period I may date the impressions

[1] There were then two French translations of the "Lives" available for popular use — Amyot's, of which a new edition was issued in 1783, and Dacier's. It was Dacier's Plutarch that Madame Roland read as a child, and which she sent for while in the Abbaye prison. When Charlotte Corday left Caen on her errand of tyrannicide, she took with her a copy of Amyot's version; and it was undoubtedly the book that inspired the deed. Another fruitful source of the curious neo-classicism of the period was the Abbé Barthélemy's "Travels of the Young Anacharsis in Greece" — the authorship of which saved the Abbé's life during the Terror.

and ideas that rendered me a republican, though I did not then dream that I should ever be a citizen of a republic."

In thus defining Madame Roland as the spiritual daughter of Plutarch, it is not intended to figure her as the mere embodiment of a trait, or as the victim of a fixed idea. Influences other than Plutarch's, and qualities less admirable than the pursuit of a high, if delusive, ideal, played an appreciable part in shaping her course and character. Rousseau left an early and indelible impress on her mind; and a shade of truth must be conceded to the somewhat cynical theory which depicts her as essentially the vain *bourgeoise*, whose republican raptures were at bottom the expression of her hatred of a society in which she found herself so inadequately placed. Vanity, wounded self-esteem, the rankling memory of social slights and humiliations, were potent forces in the overthrow of the old *régime*. The jealousy of the Third Estate of the artificial superiorities and unearned privileges of decadent feudalism is the central fact of the Revolution; and Madame Roland was no stranger to the sentiments of her class. How keenly she resented

the distinctions of birth that blocked the path and galled the pride of the educated and prosperous commoner of the eighteenth century, her memoirs too bitterly attest. To this alloy of jaundiced class feeling, joined to a certain native hardness and implacability of temper, must be ascribed what is palpably impolitic and ungenerous in the conduct of Madame Roland. A more temperate politician would have seen the folly of rejecting the alliance of Danton; a gentler woman would have relented at the sorrows of Marie Antoinette.

But whatever her blemishes may have been, Madame Roland is still the heroine of the Revolution. It is to her that the eye instinctively turns for a type and symbol of the earlier and finer characteristics of that movement, — its quasi-religious enthusiasm, its broad philanthropy, its passion for liberty and social justice, its faith in the original goodness and ultimate high destiny of man. She was the genius and inspirer of the men whose eloquence overthrew the throne and founded the Republic. Writers unfriendly to the Revolution find food for satire in the classical affectations of these young orators and their "Egeria,"

in their capacity for self-admiration, and their foible of regarding themselves and each other as so many Solons and Catos, Philopœmens and Phocions, providentially sent to refresh the tradition of ancient virtue, and to herald the regeneration of a world that priests had darkened and tyrants had enslaved. But youthful extravagances born of an honest enthusiasm for the great and the good may be easily condoned. A suggestion of tender and poetic grace will always linger about the memory of the Girondins; and impartial history, while pointing out their manifest and fatal shortcomings, will not fail to add that when the final test of their courage and sincerity came, they met their fate with a constancy worthy of those great spirits of antiquity whose renown they aspired to share.

To appreciate the "Memoirs" of Madame Roland justly it is necessary to realize and bear in mind the circumstances under which they were written. The writer was a prisoner, and under no illusions as to her impending fate. Across her path lay in unmistakable outlines the shadow of the guillotine. Her husband and her friends were outlaws, tracked from hiding-

place to hidingplace by foes in whose eyes clemency was a political crime. The trumped-up charge of her own infamy was ringing in the ears of all Paris. Under her cell window hawkers of the filthy journals of the day were audibly crying their wares and shouting her name coupled with the epithets and calumnies of *Père Duchesne.*[1] Her day was done. Her stately Plutarchian republic of wisdom and virtue was sunk in mire and blood. How clearly she had come to see the futility of the dreams on which she had lived and fed her hopes so long is shown in the apostrophe in which she bids them a last farewell: —

"Sublime illusions, generous sacrifices, hope, happiness, and country, adieu! At twelve years old I lamented in the first expansions of my young heart that I was not born at Sparta or at Rome. In the French Revolution I thought I saw the application

[1] " . . . I was not only transformed into the abettor of a counter-revolution, but into an old and toothless hag, and was exhorted to weep for my sins till the time should come to expiate them on the scaffold. The hawkers, in consequence no doubt of their instructions, did not leave the vicinity of the prison for a moment, but accompanied their proclamation of 'Père Duchesne's Great Visit to the Wife of Roland' with the most sanguinary advice to the market-people." — Madame R.'s "Historical Notes."

of the principles in which my mind was steeped. Splendid chimeras! enchanting reveries, by which I have been beguiled! The horror and corruption of one great city dispels you all."

Thus, broken and disillusionized, Madame Roland took up her pen to recount the story of her life. To refute the current slanders of her political enemies was naturally her first concern. Gradually, as she became absorbed in her task and lost in the contemplation of her tranquil and studious youth, the old idealizing mood came back and resumed its sway. Madame Roland became, as it were, her own Plutarch. Conscious of her worth and rectitude, eager to secure in history the esteem that her own times had denied her, the portrait she paints is one in which her own charms are too unreservedly portrayed, and the account of her own virtues is too strictly rendered. Madame Roland's detractors, making no allowance for the stress of her tragic situation, have dealt none too generously with this flaw in her "Memoirs." Partisan critics, countrymen of Madame Roland, have not scrupled to vent their satiric wit upon these tear-stained pages, in which a high and misjudged soul, already in

the Valley of the Shadow, claims its meed of recognition from posterity. But the sympathetic reader will perhaps find more pathos than vanity in the "self-admiration" of a defamed and desolate woman who, from the foot of the scaffold, looks back fondly upon her earlier and happier self as upon one she had known and communed with in the past.

The writings of Madame Roland, which are embraced under the collective title of "An Appeal to Impartial Posterity," and of which the personal memoir given in this volume forms a part, were composed during the five months of her imprisonment in the Abbaye and Sainte Pélagie. She was arrested and taken to the Abbaye on the morning of June 1, 1793, the day before the expulsion of the Girondists from the Convention. Twenty-four days later she was set free, but was at once rearrested and confined in Sainte Pélagie,[1]

[1] This proceeding was not a mere piece of wanton cruelty, as some of her biographers assume. There had been, it seems, a technical flaw in her first commitment; and it was to cure this that she was freed and rearrested. She, says, in her "Historical Notes": "Joubert . . . confessed that my first arrest was illegal, and that it was necessary to set me at liberty in order that I might be afterwards taken into custody according to legal forms."

THE ABBAYE

where she remained until transferred to the Conciergerie, eight days before her execution on November 8. Of her prison life Madame Roland has told the story in detail in her "Historical Notes." Her lot was smoothed in various ways by the kindness of the jailers, who braved the anger of the Commune in furtively bestowing little favors upon their winning and illustrious captive. She tells us how, after arriving at the Abbaye, she at once set about arranging the interior of her cell in her usual thrifty way — for, be it remembered, "Cato's wife" was in her domestic concerns a most practical and housewifely woman. "Rising at about noon," she says, "I considered how I should order my new lodgings:" —

"With a white napkin I covered the rude little table, which I moved to the window, where it might serve as a desk; for I made up my mind to take my meals from a corner of the mantelpiece, so that the table might be kept clean and in order for writing. Two large hat-pins, stuck into the boards, answered for a wardrobe. In my pocket I had Thomson's "Seasons," a work which I valued on more than one account; and I made a list of what other books I wanted. First was Plutarch's "Lives of Illustrious

Persons." Lavacquerie (the jailer) who had never seen his cell occupied by so contented an inmate, and who used to admire the pleasure I took in arranging my books and my flowers, told me that in future he should call it the Pavilion of Flora."

At Sainte Pélagie Madame Roland was at first confined in the common corridor of the wing set apart for female criminals. "There," she says, "under the same roof, and in the same line of cells, I dwell in the midst of murderers, thieves, and harlots. By the side of me is one of those creatures who make a trade of seduction and a traffic of innocence; above me is a forger of assignats, who, with a band of monsters to which she belonged, tore a person of her own sex to pieces upon the highway." From this Inferno of oaths and obscenity she was temporarily delivered through the compassion of the *concierge*, Madame Bouchaud. This good woman, not content with occasionally allowing Madame Roland the use of her own apartment, at length determined to assume the responsibility of removing her altogether from the cell in the corridor, and lodging her in a quiet and comfortable room on the ground floor. Here, cheered by her books and by the

flowers which the faithful Bosc brought daily from the *Jardin des Plantes*, Madame Roland passed the serener and busier days of her captivity. It was no longer, she says, the sinister visage of the turnkey that first met her eyes in the morning, and that was the last to look in upon her at night.

"It was the kindly face of Madame Bouchaud which first greeted my eyes; she it was whose loving attentions I perceived every moment of the day. There was nothing, even to the very jessamine carried up to my window and twining its pliant tendrils round the bars, that did not testify to her benevolence."

While at Sainte Pélagie Madame Roland was allowed the services of a female attendant, a prisoner confined for some minor offence, who relieved her of the coarser and more menial work. It was not without some philosophical scruples that the austere republican accepted this assistance; and she makes thereon some characteristic reflections in her most Plutarchian vein:

". . . Not but that I was very well able to be my own servant. 'Everything becomes a noble

spirit,' was said of Favonius performing for Pompey in his misfortunes the offices which valets perform for their masters. This may be applied with equal justice . . . to the austere philosopher disdaining every superfluity. Quinctius[1] was roasting his turnips when he received the ambassadors of the Samnites; and I could very well have made my bed, etc., at Sainte Pélagie."

Madame Roland was not long permitted to occupy the retreat assigned her by Madame Bouchaud. An inspector going his rounds of the prison was scandalized at the comparative comfort of her surroundings, and roughly ordered her back to her cell, adding sternly to the *concierge:* "It is your business to maintain equality." Thus was the apostle of the new social order, by an ironically drastic application of her own principles, shorn of her "privileges," and forced to do homage to the goddess of *égalité.*

While at the Abbaye Madame Roland wrote her "Historical Notes," a summary and vindication of her public life, which she intrusted to Champagneux for safe keeping. Being himself

[1] Madame Roland is in error here. It was Marcus Curius Dentatus of whom this story is related.

arrested, Champagneux consigned the manuscript to a third person, who, unwilling to be the custodian of the compromising papers, threw them into the fire, where they were partially consumed. Believing them wholly lost, the author was in despair.

"I should have preferred," she says, "to have been thrown into the fire myself. . . . These writings were the anchor to which I trusted for the justification of my memory."

After her removal to Sainte Pélagie she rewrote her "Historical Notes," adding thereto a series of "Portraits and Anecdotes," an account of her second arrest, and of the two ministries of Roland. At the same time she prepared her "Private Memoirs," — a detailed narrative of her life from infancy to the date of her marriage. Some fragmentary notes and reflections were added later, and the whole was intrusted to Bosc. But this friend, too, was presently proscribed by the Mountain. Forced to flee for his life, he first hid the precious manuscripts in a hollow tree in the forest of Montmorency, whence they were recovered eight months later, when the storm of the Terror

had subsided. Bosc's first edition of the "Memoirs" was published in 1795; and the original manuscript of seven hundred small-sized sheets of grayish paper, compactly filled in with Madame Roland's neat and firm hand-writing, is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

The "Private Memoirs" of Madame Roland is a familiar classic of French literature, and its merits need hardly be enlarged upon here. Its pathos, its playful humor, its trenchant satire, its vivid pictures of contemporary life and manners, will not be lost upon the reader. As a reflection of the most striking peculiarities of the French mind of the time, and as a description of the life of a young woman of the bourgeois class, the book has few rivals in its kind. It abounds in graceful and essentially feminine touches, in which the somewhat pompous and declamatory "Historical Notes" are lacking. One feels the sincerity, the unaffected eloquence of such charming passages, for instance, as that in which Madame Roland says, of her love of flowers: —

"I always remember the singular effect produced on me by a bunch of violets at Christmas. When I

received them I was in that mood which a season favorable to serious thought induces. My imagination slumbered. I reflected coldly, the emotions were at rest. Suddenly the color of the violets and their delicate perfume quickened my senses. It was an awakening to life. . . . A rosy tinge suffused the horizon of the day."

The style of the narrative is usually simple and direct. True, Madame Roland idealizes at times, and it is too often the hand of Rousseau that guides her pen, impelling it to disclosures from which her native good sense and delicacy would have shrunk. While the memoir attests throughout the rare fortitude and self-control of the author, it nevertheless betrays at intervals how keenly she felt her situation. More than once the rapid flow of the recital is broken, as it were, by a sob, an exclamation of despair, as the writer drops her pen, and gives vent for the moment to her grief; and then, through the mist of time, one sees, not the somewhat cold and Amazonian Madame Roland of conventional history and panegyric, but the poor prisoner racked with anguish which her pride struggles to repress, of whom her attendant said to her fellow-captives: —

"Before you she collects all her strength, but in her cell she remains sometimes for hours together leaning against her window, weeping." "Alas!" wrote Madame Roland to Bosc, "I know now what it is, that malady the English call heart-break. I have no desire to delay its results."

On November 1st, Madame Roland was taken to the Conciergerie, a prison over whose portals was written the warning to abandon hope. Her Girondist friends had, on the day before, issued thence on their way to the scaffold; and her own doom was now clearly sealed. She was at last to assume in grim reality the rôle she had so often enacted in fancy, in the days of her romantic youth. With Socrates she was to drink the hemlock; with Agis she was to bend the neck in virtuous resignation to the axe. The sense of the dramatic possibilities of her situation, of its enduring publicity, undoubtedly helped to steel her to its terrors; and her native courage was above that of most mortals. Of her bearing during the closing days at the Conciergerie we have an attractive picture from witnesses who cannot be suspected of a desire to gild the truth. Those to whom her political views

were abhorrent are the ones most eloquent in her praise. She seems to have moved among her companions in a strange state of exaltation, as one who had already done with earthly things.

"From the time of her arrival," writes the Duchesse de Grammont, "the apartment of Madame Roland became an asylum of peace in the bosom of this hell. If she descended into the court, her simple presence restored good order, and the abandoned women there, on whom no other power exerted an influence, were restrained by the fear of displeasing her. She gave alms to the most needy, and to all counsel, consolation, and hope."

Says Comte Beugnot: —

"Something more than is generally found in the look of woman beamed from her eyes, which were large, dark, and brilliant. She often spoke to me at the grating, with the freedom and energy of a great man. . . . We used to gather round her and listen in a kind of admiring wonder. Her discourse was serious without being cold; and she expressed herself with an elegance, a harmony, and a modulation, that made of her language a kind of music of which the ear never wearied."

On the day after her arrival at the Conciergerie, Madame Roland was brought before

the Tribunal for the first time; two days later she underwent a second examination; on the 7th of November the witnesses against her were questioned; and the day following was set for her trial. The Indictment of Fouquier-Tinville charged her with being "one of the principal agents and abettors of the Girondist attempt to rouse the Departments against the Convention. The proof cited in that instrument consisted of a half-dozen letters indicating that she sympathized with the movement. Of evidence that she had in any way actively aided it or shared in it there was no shred. That her trial was to be a mere form which could have but one issue she was fully aware. On the night preceding it Chauveau-Lagarde, a young lawyer who courageously offered to defend her, came to the prison to consult with her. Madame Roland listened to his suggestions with attention, but plainly without hope. When he rose to go she slipped a ring from her finger and handed it to him without speaking. The young man divined her meaning.

"Madame," he said, deeply moved, "we shall see each other to-morrow after the trial!" "To-morrow," she replied, "I shall be no more. I value

your services, but they might prove fatal to you. You would ruin yourself without saving me. Spare me the pain of putting the life of a good man in danger. Do not come to the court, for I shall disclaim you if you do; but accept this, the only token my gratitude can offer. To-morrow I shall be in eternity."

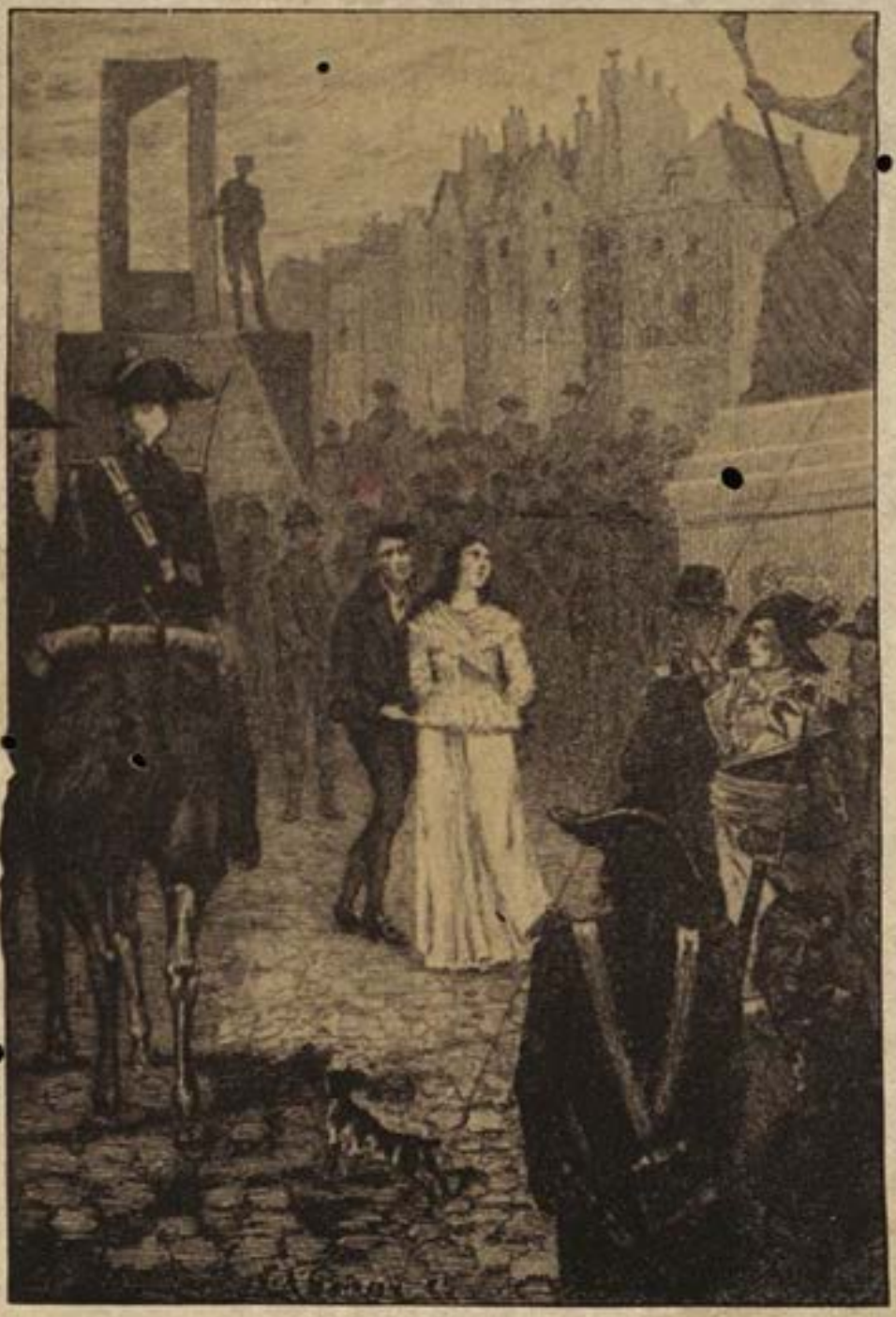
On the morrow, as she left her cell to await the summons to the bar, it was seen that she had attired herself with unusual care, and with a certain pathetic regard to the event she felt was approaching. Her robe was of white, trimmed with snowy lace, and fastened with a girdle of black velvet. Her long, dark hair flowed loosely below her waist. As she entered the hall-way Comte Beugnot joined her.

"Her face," he writes, "seemed to me more animated than usual. Its color was exquisite, and there was a smile on her lips. With one hand she held up the train of her robe; the other she abandoned to the prisoners who pressed forward to kiss it. Those who realized the fate that awaited her sobbed about her and commended her to God. . . . I delivered my message to her in the passage. She replied in a few words spoken in a firm voice. She had begun a sentence when two officers from the interior called her to the bar. At this summons, so terrible for

another, she stopped, pressed my hand, and said: 'Farewell, sir, let us make peace, it is time.' Raising her eyes she saw that I was trying to repress my tears. She seemed moved, and added but two words 'Have courage.'"

When Madame Roland came out from the Tribunal she passed the wicket with the light step of one elated with the joy of acquittal; but to the inquiring looks of her friends she replied with a gesture signifying that she had been condemned to die. The death-cart already awaited her in the courtyard.

How she bore herself on her journey along that "*via dolorosa* of the Revolution," which led from the Conciergerie to the Place de la Guillotine, the world knows. No recorded pilgrim of the long train that fared that way in those heroic days showed a sublimer indifference to its terrors. A spectator who saw her as she passed the Pont Neuf wrote of her as standing erect and calm in the tumbrel, "her eyes shining, her color fresh and brilliant, with a smile on her lips, as she tried to cheer her companion, an old man overcome by the fear of approaching death." At the foot of the scaffold she asked for pen and paper "to write



MADAME ROLAND ON THE WAY TO THE GUILLOTINE

"O! Liberté comme on t'a jouée!"

the strange thoughts that were rising in her." When the executioner grasped her arm to assist her in mounting the steps, she drew back and begged that her companion might be allowed to precede her. The custom of the guillotine allowed her, as a woman, the privilege of dying first; but she wished to spare the infirm old man a scene that would augment his fears. Sanson objected. "Come, citizen," she urged with a smile, "you cannot deny a lady her last request." Her wish was granted.

As they were binding her to the plank her gaze fell upon the colossal statue of liberty erected in memory of that 10th of August which she and her friends had made: "*O liberté,*" she exclaimed, "*comme on t'a jouée!*"

The plank was swung back, the axe fell, and the spirit of Madame Roland (let us hope) joined its chosen kindred.

E. G. J.

THE PRIVATE MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME ROLAND

I

PRISON OF SAINTE PÉLAGIE,
Aug. 9, 1793.

THE daughter of an artist, the wife of a man of letters (who, become a minister, remained an honest man), now a prisoner, destined perhaps to a violent and unexpected death, I have known both happiness and adversity, I have seen glory at hand, and I have experienced injustice.

Born in an obscure station, but of respectable parents, I spent my youth in the lap of the fine arts, feasting on the charms of study, ignorant of all superiority but that of merit, all greatness but that of virtue.

Arrived at years of maturity, I lost all hopes of that fortune, which might have placed me in a condition suitable to the education I had re-

ceived. A marriage with a man of position appeared to compensate this loss; it prepared for me new misfortunes.

A gentle disposition, a strong mind, a solid understanding, an extremely affectionate heart, and an exterior which announced these qualities, rendered me dear to those by whom I was known. My station has created me enemies; personally I have had none; by those who have spoken the most ill of me I have never been seen.

So true is it that things are rarely what they appear to be, that the periods of my life in which I have tasted most pleasure, or experienced most vexation, were those which appeared to others the very reverse: the solution is that happiness depends on the affections more than on events.

I purpose to employ the leisure of my captivity in retracing what has happened to me from my tenderest infancy to the present moment. Thus to tread over again all the steps of our career is to live a second time; and what, in the gloom of a prison, can we do better than to transport elsewhere our existence by pleasing fictions or the recollection of interesting occurrences?

If experience is less acquired by acting than by reflecting on what we see and on what we do, mine will be greatly augmented by my present undertaking.

Public affairs and my own private sentiments have afforded me sufficient matter for thinking and subjects enough for my pen, during the two months of my imprisonment, without obliging me to have recourse to distant times. Accordingly, the first five weeks were dedicated to Historical Notes, which formed perhaps no uninteresting collection. They have just been destroyed.[1] I have felt all the bitterness of this loss, which I shall never repair. But I should despise myself, could I suffer my mind to sink under anything that might occur. In all the troubles I have experienced, the most lively impression of pain has been almost immediately accompanied with the ambition of opposing my strength to the evil, and of surmounting it, either by doing good to others, or by exalting my own courage. Thus misfortune may pursue, but cannot overwhelm me; tyrants may perse-

[1] They were only partially destroyed. The account of her arrest, of the first days at the Abbaye, and of her life during Roland's term of office escaped the flames.

cute, but never, never shall they debase me. My Historical Notes are gone: I am about to write others of a private nature; and, prudently accommodating myself to my weakness at a moment when my feelings are acute, I shall talk of myself, the better to divert those feelings. I shall relate the good and the bad with equal freedom. He who dares not speak well of himself is almost always a coward who knows and dreads the ill that may be said of him; and he who hesitates to confess his faults has neither the courage to vindicate nor the virtue to repair them. Thus frank with respect to myself, I shall observe no restraint toward others: father, mother, friends, husband, I shall describe as they are, or in the colors in which they appeared to me.

While I remained in a quiet and retired station of life my natural sensibility so absorbed my other qualities, that it alone displayed itself, or governed them all. My first desire was to please and to do good. I was a little like that good M. de Gourville, of whom Madame de Sévigné said that the love of his neighbor cut off half his words; and I merited what Sainte-Lette said of me, that with wit to

point an epigram I never suffered one to escape me.

Since the energy of my character has been unfolded by circumstances, by political and other storms, my frankness stands foremost, without considering too nicely the little scratches it may inflict incidentally. Still I deal not in epigrams; they imply the taking a pleasure in the wounds dealt by satire, and I find no amusement in killing flies. But I love to do justice by the utterance of truths; and I refrain not from the most severe ones in presence of the parties concerned, without suffering myself to be alarmed, or moved, or angry, whatever may be their effect.

Gatien Phlipon, my father, was by profession an engraver; he also cultivated painting, and applied himself to that in enamel, less from taste than expectation of profit; but the fire, which it is necessary to employ in enamelling, agreeing neither with his sight nor his constitution, he was obliged to relinquish this branch. He confined himself therefore to the first, the profits of which were moderate. But, though he was industrious, though the times were favorable to the exercise of his art, though he

had much business, and employed a considerable number of workmen, a desire to make a more speedy fortune led him to speculate. He purchased diamonds and other jewels, or took them in pay from the tradesmen who employed him, to sell them again as opportunity offered. I mention this circumstance, because I have observed that ambition is generally fatal in all classes of men; for the few who are so lucky as to be raised by it, multitudes become its victims. The example of my father will afford me more than one application of this maxim. His art was sufficient to procure him a comfortable subsistence; he sought to become rich, and he ended with being ruined.

Strong and healthy, active and vain, he loved his wife, and was fond of dress. Without learning, he had that degree of taste and knowledge which the fine arts give superficially, in whatever branch they are practised. Thus, notwithstanding his regard for wealth and whatever could procure it, he trafficked with tradesmen, but was intimate only with artists, painters, and sculptors. He led a regular life, while his ambition was not unbridled, or had experienced no disappointments. He could not be said to be

a virtuous man, but he had a great deal of what is called honor. He would have had no objection to the receiving for a thing more than it was worth, but he would have killed himself rather than not pay the stipulated price of what he had purchased.

Marguerite Bimont, his wife, brought him, as a dower, little money, but a heavenly mind, and a most enchanting countenance. The eldest of six children, to whom she had been a second mother, she married at six-and-twenty, only to resign her place to her sisters. Her affectionate heart and captivating mind ought to have procured her a union with a man of sensibility and enlightened understanding; but her parents proposed to her an honest man whose abilities insured a subsistence, and her reason accepted him. Instead of happiness, which she could scarcely expect, she felt that she might at least secure domestic tranquillity. The ability to limit our desires is a proof of wisdom: positive enjoyments are rarer than we imagine, but virtue never lacks consolation.

I was the second of the seven children born to my parents, all of whom but myself died either at nurse or from mishaps while coming into

the world; and my mother sometimes repeated with pleasure, that I was the only one with whom she had experienced no disaster; for her delivery had been as happy as her pregnancy: it seemed as if I had contributed to her health.

An aunt of my father selected for me, in the neighborhood of Arpajon, where she frequently went in summer, a healthy and good-tempered nurse, much esteemed in the place, particularly because the brutality of her husband rendered her unhappy, without, however, corrupting her disposition or altering her conduct. Madame Besnard, my great-aunt, had no child; her husband was my godfather; they both considered me as their own daughter. Their attentions to me have never slackened; they are still alive, and in the decline of their age are overwhelmed with sorrow, lamenting the fate of their darling niece, in whom they had placed their hopes and their pride. Venerable pair! be comforted: it is given to few to run their career in that silence and tranquillity which have attended you. I am not unequal to the misfortunes that assail me, and I shall never cease to honor your virtues.

The vigilance of my nurse was encouraged or

recompensed by my good relations; her zeal and success procured her the friendship of my family. As long as she lived, she never spent two years without coming to Paris to see me. When she heard that death had deprived me of my mother, she immediately hastened to me. I still recollect her appearance: I was confined to my bed with affliction: her presence recalling too forcibly to my mind my recent calamity, the first I had experienced, I fell into convulsions that terrified her. She withdrew; I saw her no more; she died soon after. I remember visiting her at the cottage in which she suckled me. I listened with emotion to the tales which her good-natured simplicity took pleasure in relating, as she pointed out my favorite spots, and related the tricks I had played her, with the humor of which she was still entertained. At two years of age I was brought home to my father's. I have frequently been told of the surprise I manifested at seeing the lamps lighted in the streets in the evening, at which I exclaimed, "What charming bottles!" . . . These little anecdotes, and others of equal importance, interesting only to nurses and fond uncles and

aunts, should be here passed over in silence. It will not be expected of me to depict here a little brunette, two years old, whose dark hair played gracefully about a face animated with a glowing complexion, and which breathed the happiness of an age of which it had all the health. I know a better moment for drawing my portrait, and I am not so maladroit as to anticipate it.

The discretion and other excellent qualities of my mother soon gave her an ascendency over my docile and affectionate disposition, which she never employed but for my good.

So great was this ascendency, that, in those little disputes unavoidable between authoritative reason and resisting infancy, she found it necessary to inflict no other punishment than gravely calling me "Mademoiselle" and fixing on me an eye of reproof. I still recollect the impression made upon me by her look, usually so affectionate; I hear, with a kind of trembling, this word Mademoiselle substituted, with solemn and touching dignity, for the gentle "*ma fille*," or the graceful appellation of Manon. Yes, Manon; for so I was called. I sympathize with the lovers of romance. Certainly the name is

not noble; it ill suits a heroine in the "grand style;" nevertheless, it was mine; and it is history that I am writing. The most fastidious, however, would have been reconciled to the name, had they heard it pronounced by my mother, and seen her to whom it was addressed. What expression could want grace when she accompanied it with her enchanting tone? And when her affectionate voice so thrilled my heart, did it not teach me to resemble her?

Lively, without being boisterous, and naturally studious, I required only to be employed, and readily seized every idea that was offered me. This disposition was turned to so good account, that I do not remember having been taught to read. I have heard that at four years old the business, so to speak, was completed, and that, after that period, all that was necessary was to provide me with books. Whatever were put into my hands, or I could anywhere obtain, engrossed all my attention, and nothing could divert me from them but a nosegay. The sight of a flower pleases my imagination and flatters my senses to an inexpressible degree; it awakens to luxury the sense of existence. Under the tranquil shelter

of my paternal roof, I was happy from my infancy with flowers and books; in the narrow confines of a prison, amidst the chains imposed by the most revolting tyranny, I have the same sentiment, and I forget the injustice of men, their follies, and my calamities, with books and flowers.

It was too excellent an opportunity of teaching me the Old and New Testaments, and the small and large Catechisms, to be neglected. I learned everything it was thought proper to give me, and I should have repeated the Koran had I been taught to read it. I remember a painter of the name of Guibal, since settled at Stuttgart, who a few years ago wrote an essay in praise of Poussin which obtained the prize from the Academy of Rouen, and who frequently came to my father's. He was a merry fellow, who told me many a nonsensical tale, which I have not forgotten, and by which I was vastly amused; nor was he less diverted in making me display in my turn my slender stock of knowledge. I think I see him now, with his whimsical face, sitting in an arm-chair, taking me between his knees, on which I rested my elbows, and bidding me repeat the Athanasian

Creed; then rewarding my compliance with the story of Tanger, whose nose was so long that he was obliged, when he walked, to twist it round his arm. More absurd contrasts than this might be made.

When seven years old, I was sent every Sunday to the parish church, to attend "Catechism," as it was called, in order to prepare me for confirmation. In the present state of things, they who read this passage may perhaps ask what that was; so I will inform them. In the corner of a church, chapel, or other place of devotion, a few rows of chairs or benches, extending to a certain length, were placed opposite each other. An open space was left in the middle, in which was a seat higher than the rest. This was the curule chair of the young priest, whose office it was to instruct the children that attended. They were made to repeat by heart the Epistle and Gospel for the day, the Collect, and such portion of the Catechism as was appointed for the week's task. When the children were numerous the catechizing priest had a little clerk who heard them repeat, while the master reserved the more important questions to himself. In some parishes pupils of both sexes attended to-

gether, ranged only on different forms; but in parishes in general they attended separately. The mothers of the children, always greedy of the bread of the word, however coarsely prepared, were present at these instructions, which were graduated according to the ages of the pupils, or to their stage of preparedness for confirmation or for receiving the first communion. The zealous *curés* would from time to time visit their little flocks, who were taught to rise respectfully at their approach. A few questions were put to the more promising children to test their proficiency. The mothers of the ones questioned were elated at the distinction; and the good fathers withdrew amid their grateful curtsies. M. Garat, the rector of my parish, that of Saint Bartholomew, a worthy man with some reputation for learning, in spite of the fact that he was incapable of delivering two sentences together of common sense from the pulpit in which he was ambitious of shining — much as M. Garat, minister of state, is reputed a man of ability, though totally ignorant of his trade — M. Garat, I say, my rector, came one day to my "Catechism," and in order to sound the depth of my theological erudition, and display his own

sagacity, asked me how many orders of spirits there were in the celestial hierarchy. From the ironical tone and air of triumph with which he put the question, I knew that he expected to puzzle me; and I answered, with a smile, that though many were enumerated in the preface to the Missal, I had read, in other books, of nine, and I repeated to him *angels, archangels, thrones, dominions*, etc. Never was rector so satisfied with the learning of his neophyte. From that moment also my reputation was established among the devout matrons. I was accordingly a chosen vessel, as hereafter will be seen.

Some persons will perhaps say, that, with my mother's good sense, it is astonishing she should have sent me to these "Catechisms;" but there is a reason for everything. My mother had a younger brother, an ecclesiastic belonging to her parish, to whose care was committed the "Catechism of Confirmation," to use the technical term. The presence of his niece was an admirable example, calculated to induce those who were not of what is called the lower order of the people to send their children also; a circumstance that could not fail to be pleasing to the rector. I had, besides, a memory which

was sure to secure me the first rank; and everything combining to support this superiority, my parents gratified their vanity, while they appeared only to pursue the path of humility. It happened that, in the distribution of prizes, which took place, with no small parade, at the end of the year, I obtained the first, without the least partiality being shown me; and the churchwardens and clergy thought my uncle extremely fortunate, who was on this account the more noticed, which was all that was necessary to prepossess every beholder in his favor. A handsome person, extreme benevolence, an easy temper, the gentlest of manners, and the utmost gayety, attended him to the last moment of his life. He died canon of Vincennes, just as the Revolution was about to abolish all ecclesiastical dignities. I conceive myself to have lost in him the last of my relations on the maternal side, and I cannot recollect a single circumstance respecting him without emotion. My eagerness to learn and my quickness of apprehension inspired him with the idea of teaching me Latin. I was delighted; it was a feast for me to find a new subject of study. I had at home masters for writing, geography, dancing, and music; my

MADAME ROLAND

FROM THE PAINTING BY GOUPIL

father instructed me in drawing; but in all this there was nothing too much. Rising at five in the morning, when every one else in the house was asleep, I used to steal softly, in my bed-gown and without shoes or stockings, to a corner of my mother's chamber, where was the table containing my lessons, which I copied or repeated with such assiduity that my improvement was astonishing. My masters became the more attached to me. They gave me long and interesting tasks, which called forth on my part additional attention. I had not a tutor who did not seem as much charmed to teach me as I was grateful for being taught; not one who, after attending me for a year or two, was not constrained to say that his instructions were unnecessary and that he ought no longer to be paid, at the same time requesting permission to visit my parents occasionally in order to converse with me. I shall ever honor the memory of the good M. Marchand, who, when I was five years old, taught me to write and afterwards instructed me in geography, and with whom I studied history. He was a discreet, patient, clear-headed, and methodical personage, to whom I gave the nickname of "M. Doucet." I

saw him married to a worthy woman, a dependant of the family of Nesle. I visited him in his last sickness, an attack of the gout, which occasioned his death at the age of fifty. I was then eighteen.

I have not forgotten my music master Cajon, a little, lively, talkative being, born at Mâcon, where, when a boy, he had belonged to the choir; he was afterwards, in turn, soldier, deserter, Capuchin friar, clerk in a counting-house, and, lastly, vagrant, arriving at Paris with a wife and children and without a *sou* in his pocket. Having a pleasant counter voice, rarely to be met with in men who have not undergone a certain operation, and admirably adapted to the teaching of young persons to sing, he set up as music teacher. He was introduced to my father, I know not by whom, and I was his first scholar. He bestowed on me considerable pains. He borrowed money of my parents, which he quickly dissipated; never returned my collection of lessons by Bordier, which he gleaned with so much art as to compile from it an "Elements of Music" which he published under his own name; lived in style, without means; and, after fifteen years, ended

his career by decamping from Paris, where he had involved himself in debt, and repairing to Russia, whence I have never heard of him.

Of Mozon, the dancing master, an honest and frightfully ugly Savoyard, whose wen I think I still see embellishing his right cheek, as he inclined his pockfretted and flat-nosed visage to the left on his instrument, I might relate some humorous anecdotes; so, too, of poor Mignard, my master for the guitar, a sort of Spanish Colossus, whose hands were like Esau's, and who in gravity, ceremoniousness, and rhodomontade, was inferior to none of his countrymen.

The bashful Watrin, whose fifty years, periwig, spectacles, and rubicund face, seemed all in commotion as he placed the fingers of his little scholar on the strings of her fiddle, and taught her to guide the bow, did not continue long with me; but, to compensate for this, the reverend Father Colomb, a Barnabite, once a missionary, now superior of his convent at the age of seventy-five and my mother's confessor, sent to her house his violoncello, upon which he accompanied me while I played on my guitar. I recollect his astonishment when one

day, taking up his instrument, I played with tolerable precision a few airs which I had studied in private. Had there been a double bass in the house, I would have mounted a chair but I would have made something of it. To avoid anachronism, however, it must be observed, that I am here anticipating things and that I am arrived in my narrative at the period only of seven years, to which I return.

I have advanced thus far without noticing the influence my father had in my education. It was in reality trifling, for he interfered in it but little; and it may not be amiss to relate an occurrence that induced him to interfere still less.

I was extremely obstinate; that is to say, I did not readily consent to anything of which I saw not the reason; and when the exercise of authority alone appeared to me, or I fancied that I perceived the dictates of caprice, I could not submit. My mother, penetrating and discreet, rightly judged that I must either be governed by reason or drawn by the cords of affection; and, treating me accordingly, she experienced no opposition to her will. My father, hasty in his manner, issued his orders

imperiously, and my compliance was reluctant and slow, if not wholly refused. If, despot-like, he attempted to punish me, his gentle little daughter was converted into a lion. On the two or three occasions when he whipped me, I bit the thigh across which he placed me, and protested against his injunctions. One day, when I was a little indisposed, it was thought proper that I should take some medicine. A draught was brought me; I applied it to my lips; its smell made me reject it with loathing. My mother employed her influence to overcome my repugnance; I was desirous of obeying her; I exerted the sincerest efforts; but every time the nauseous potion approached my nose, my senses revolted, and I rejected it in spite of myself. My mother's patience was exhausted. I wept both for her and for myself, and was still less capable of complying with her will. My father came; he flew into a rage and whipped me, ascribing my resistance to stubbornness. From that instant all desire of obedience vanished, and I declared openly my resolution not to take the medicine. Great uproar, renewed threats, a second whipping. I was only the more indignant, and shrieked

terribly. I lifted my eyes to heaven, and prepared to throw away the draught they were again presenting to me. My gestures betrayed me. My father, in a rage, threatened to whip me a third time. I feel, while I write this, the sudden revulsion that came over me. My tears all at once ceased, my sobbings were at an end. A sudden calm concentred my faculties into a single resolution. I raised myself, turned to the bedside, leaned my head against the wall, lifted up my chemise, and exposed myself to the rod in silence. Had my father killed me on the spot, he should not have drawn from me a single sigh.

My mother, painfully agitated during this scene, had need of all her prudence not to increase my father's rage. Having prevailed on him to quit the room, she put me to bed without saying a word. Two hours after, she returned, and conjured me, with tears in her eyes, to occasion her no further vexation, and to take the medicine. I looked steadfastly in her face, took the glass, and swallowed it at a draught. In a quarter of an hour, however, it was vomited up again, and I was seized with a violent paroxysm of fever, which it was neces-

sary to cure by other means than nauseous drugs and whipping. I was at that time little more than six years old.

All the circumstances of this scene are as vivid in my mind, all the sensations I experienced as distinct to my imagination, as if they had recently occurred. I have since felt, on serious and trying occasions, the same inflexible firmness; and it would at this moment cost me no more to ascend undauntedly the scaffold, than it did then to resign myself to brutal treatment, which might have killed, but could not conquer me.

From that instant my father never laid his hand upon me nor even reprimanded me. He frequently caressed me, taught me to draw, made me the companion of his walks, and treated me with a kindness that rendered him more respectable in my eyes, and obtained him my entire submission. The seventh anniversary of my birth was celebrated as the attainment of the age of reason, when it might be expected of me to follow its dictates. This was a politic sort of plea for observing towards me a more respectful treatment, that should give me confidence in myself without exciting

my vanity. My days flowed gently on in domestic quiet and activity of mind. My mother was almost always at home, and received but little company. We went out but two days in the week, once to visit the relations of my father, and once on Sunday, to see my grandmother Bimont, go to church, and take a walk. The visit to my grandmother was always after vespers. She was a large and handsome woman, who at an early age had been attacked by the palsy, which affected her understanding; she had gradually sunk into a state of dotage, spending her days in her easy chair at the window, or the fireside, according to the season. An old servant, who had been forty years in the family, had the care of her. This servant, Marie, regularly upon my arrival gave me some dainty or other to eat. So far it was well; but when this was gone, I was tired of the visit. I sought for books; there was only the Psalter; and, for want of better, I have twenty times read over the French and chanted the Latin. If I was gay, my grandmother would weep; if I fell down, or received a bump, she would burst into a laugh. This did not please me. I was told it was a result of her malady, but I did

not find it on that account less mortifying or disagreeable. I could have borne with her laughing at me; but her tears were always accompanied by cries at once shocking and pitiable, which filled me with a species of terror. The old servant vented her garrulity upon my mother, who imposed it upon herself as a duty to spend two hours with my grandmother, complaisantly listening to Marie's babble. This was assuredly a painful exercise of my patience, but I was fain to submit; for one day, when I cried for vexation and begged to go away, my mother, as a punishment, staid the whole evening. She did not fail, at proper times, to represent to me her assiduity in these visits as a strict and affecting duty which it was honorable in me to participate in. I know not how she managed it, but my heart received the lesson with emotion. When the Abbé Bimont happened to be there, it afforded me an inexpressible joy. This dear little uncle made me dance and sing and play; but his visits were seldom, as he had charge of the children of the choir, which necessarily confined him at home. This brings to my mind one of his pupils, a lad of a prepossessing countenance, whom he was fond of prais-

ing, as he gave him, he said, little trouble. His promising talents obtained him, a few years after, a scholarship at some college, and he became an abbé. It was Noël, known at first by some little productions, employed later by the minister Le Brun in the diplomatic line, sent last year to London, and now in Italy.

My studies occupied my days, which seemed too short to me; for I had never finished all that I wished to have accomplished. Besides the elementary books with which I had been furnished, I soon exhausted our little library. I devoured every volume it contained; and when I lacked new books, I began the old again. I remember two folio Lives of the Saints, a Bible of the same size in an old version, an old translation of Appian's "Civil Wars," a description of Turkey written in a wretched style, all which I read many times over. I also found the "Comical Romance" of Scarron; some collections of alleged *bons-mots*, on which I did not bestow a second perusal; the "Memoirs" of the brave de Pontis, which were amusing; those of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, whose pride did not displease me; and some other antiquated books, the contents, binding, blots, and

moth-eaten state of which I still remember. The passion for learning possessed me to such a degree, that, having fallen upon a treatise on the art of heraldry, I set myself instantly to study it. It had colored plates, with which I was diverted, and I was desirous of knowing the names of all the little figures they contained. I soon astonished my father with a display of science, by making some remarks on a seal that was not engraved agreeably to the rules of the art. On this subject I became his oracle, and I never misled him. A short treatise on contracts fell into my hands. This also I endeavored to learn, for I read nothing which I was not ambitious of retaining; but it soon tired me, so that I did not reach the fourth chapter.

To the Bible I was much attached, and I continually resorted to it. In our old translations things are expressed with blunt plainness and without the smallest circumlocution, as in books of anatomy. I was struck with certain simple expressions, which have never escaped my memory. Hence I derived information not usually given to girls of my age; but it exhibited itself to me in no very seducing light.

I had too much exercise for my thoughts to be inclined to give attention to things of this mere material nature, and which appeared to my imagination endowed with so few attractions. I could not, however, help laughing when my grandmamma spoke to me of little children dug out of the parsley-bed; and I told her that my *Ave Maria* informed me they came from another place, without troubling my head in what manner they got there.

In rummaging the house I found a source of reading which I husbanded for a considerable time. What my father called his *atelier* adjoined the apartment in which I usually sat, which was a handsome room that might not improperly be styled a *salon*, but which my mother modestly called a parlor, neatly furnished, and ornamented with looking-glasses and pictures. It was here I received my lessons. The recess, lit by a small window on one side of the fireplace, was converted into a closet, in which was placed a bed (so closely shut in that I was obliged to get into it at the foot), a chair, a small table, and a few shelves. This was my sanctum. On the opposite side of the *salon* was the *atelier*, a large room littered with engravings, carvings,

etc., into which I stole of an evening, or at those hours when no person was there. I had remarked a secret corner where one of the young men hid some books. I took away one at a time with the utmost caution, and hastened to my den to devour it, taking care to replace it at a proper time, without mentioning it to any person. They were in general a good sort of books. One day I perceived that my mother had made the same discovery. I saw a volume in her hands which had previously passed through mine. I then no longer felt myself under restraint; and, without telling a falsehood, observing silence on what had passed, I assumed the appearance of having followed her example. This young man whose name was Courson, to which he afterwards prefixed the *de* when he winded himself into place at Versailles as teacher to the pages, did not at all resemble his comrades: he was not destitute of politeness, had an air of good breeding, and sought instruction. He said nothing of the occasional disappearance of his books, so that it seemed as if there had been a tacit compact between the parties. In this way I read many volumes of travels, of which I was passionately

fond; among others, those of Regnard, which were the first; some plays of second-rate authors, and Dacier's Plutarch. This last work was more to my taste than anything I had yet seen, not excepting even pathetic stories, by which I was however much interested, as that of the unfortunate couple, by Labedoyère, which I have now by me, though I have never since read it. But Plutarch seemed to be exactly the food that suited my mind. I shall never forget the Lent of 1763, at which time I was nine years of age, when I carried it to church instead of my prayer-book. From that period I may date the impressions and ideas that rendered me a republican, though I did not dream at the time that I should ever become a citizen of a republic.

"Telemachus," and "Jerusalem Delivered" interfered a little with the current of these majestic thoughts. The tender Fénelon moved my heart, and Tasso fired my imagination. Sometimes I read aloud at the request of my mother, an occupation of which I was by no means fond, as it suited not that thoughtfulness which formed my delight, and which led me to proceed with less rapidity. But I would have

plucked out my tongue rather than have read in this manner the episodes of the island of Calypso, and a number of passages in Tasso. My respiration quickened, a sudden glow overspread my countenance, and my altered voice would have betrayed my agitation. With Telemachus I was Eucharis, and Herminia with Tancred. Completely transformed into these personages, I had no consciousness of any other existence. I forgot myself, I was regardless of everything around me. I was the very characters themselves, and I saw only the objects which existed for them. It was a trance that absorbed all my faculties. Meanwhile, I recollect having seen with considerable emotion a young painter of the name of Taboral, who came occasionally to our house. He was about twenty years of age, had a soft voice, languishing features, and blushed like a girl. When I heard him in the work-shop, I had always a crayon or something to fetch; but as the sight of him was as embarrassing as agreeable to me, I returned more speedily than I entered, and ran to conceal my beating heart and trembling limbs in my closet. I can readily believe at present, that, with such a

disposition, assisted by leisure or a certain species of company, both the imagination and the conduct might undergo a very speedy revolution. The works of which I have been speaking gave place to others, and their impressions were softened. Some of the writings of Voltaire in particular were instrumental in producing this effect. One day as I was amusing myself with "Candide," my mother having left the room for a moment, the lady with whom she was playing piquet asked me to show her the book I was reading. On my mother's return she expressed her astonishment at finding such a work in my hands; my mother, without replying, contented herself with bidding me carry it back to the place from which I had taken it. I regarded with an unfavorable eye this woman, fat and unwieldy, assuming a consequential grimace on what she had done; and I have never since honored Madame Charbonné with a smile. My good mother, however, made no alteration in her conduct, but permitted me to read whatever books I could procure, without seeming to attend to them, though she knew very well what they were. Meanwhile no immoral pub-

lication fell in my way; even to this day I know only the titles of two or three; and the taste I have acquired has never exposed me to the smallest temptation of procuring them. As I preferred books to everything else, my father sometimes made me presents of this kind; but, piquing himself as he did on seconding my propensity to serious studies, his choice was whimsical enough. For instance, he gave me Fénelon on female education, and Locke on that of children, thus putting into the hands of the pupil what were designed for the tutor. I am persuaded, however, that this mistake was not unproductive of benefit, and that chance served me better than perhaps design might have done. I was arrived at considerable maturity; I loved to reflect; I thought with seriousness of forming my character, that is, I studied the movements of my mind; I sought to know myself; I felt that I had a destination which I must enable myself to fill. Religious notions began to ferment in my brain, and soon produced a violent explosion. But before I describe them, it may be proper to know what became of my Latin.

The rudiments of grammar were well arranged

in my head. I declined nouns and conjugated verbs, though it appeared to me. tiresome enough; but the hope of reading one day in that language the admirable productions of which I had heard, and of which my books gave me some idea, supported my courage through the dryness and difficulty of the task. It was not thus with my little uncle, for so I called the Abbé Bimont. Young, good-humored, indolent, and gay, bestowing no pains on any one, and as little inclined to take any for himself, he was completely tired of playing the pedagogue with the children of the choir; and, respecting myself, he liked better to take a stroll with me than to give me a lesson, or to make me laugh and play than to hear me repeat my rudiments. He was little punctual either as to the hour or the day of coming to our house, and a thousand circumstances combined to defer his lessons; but I was desirous of learning, and loath to relinquish what I had once undertaken. It was accordingly resolved that I should go to him three mornings in the week, but he was seldom at leisure to dedicate even a few moments to me; I found him either busied in parish affairs, occupied with the children, or

breakfasting with a friend. I lost my time, the winter arrived, and my Latin was abandoned. From this attempt I have preserved only a sort of glimmering or instinct of knowledge, that, on devotional occasions, enabled me to repeat or chant the psalms without being absolutely ignorant of what I was saying, and which gave me considerable facility for the study of languages in general, particularly the Italian, which I learnt a few years after, without a master and without difficulty.

My father took but little pains to perfect me in drawing; he rather amused himself with my aptitude than endeavored to cultivate in me extraordinary talents. A few words dropped by my mother in the course of conversation gave me to understand that, from prudential motives, she was not desirous of my making any great proficiency in the art. "I would not have her become a painter," said she; "it may lead her, from the nature of the study, to connections which we may not approve." I had also begun engraving. Nothing came amiss to me. I learned to handle the graver, and soon surmounted the first difficulties. On the birthdays of my good old relations, which were

always religiously celebrated, I carried for my present either a head which I had drawn with unusual care for the occasion, or a neat copper-plate engraving, consisting of a nosegay and some complimentary verses, written with care, and in which my "M. Doucet" had assisted me in turning the rhymes. In return I received almanacs, which greatly amused me, and presents of such little trinkets as were adapted to my use, and which were commonly ornaments of dress, of which I was fond. My mother encouraged this taste in me. In her own dress she was plain, and frequently even negligent; but her daughter was her doll, whom she delighted to decorate; and from my infancy I was dressed with a degree of elegance, and even richness, apparently superior to my station. The dresses that were in fashion for young ladies in those days were made like the court robes, fitting close at the waist, which it displayed to advantage, full below, with a long train sweeping the ground and adorned with different trimmings, according to the taste of the wearer. Mine were of fine silk, of some simple pattern and modest color, but in price and quality equal to the best gala suits of my mother. My toilet

was a grievous business to me, for my hair was frequently frizzed, papered, tortured with hot irons, and all the ridiculous and barbarous implements at that time in use. My head was so extremely tender, and the pulling that was necessary so painful, that, upon occasions of full dress, it always forced tears from me, though I uttered no complaint.

Methinks I hear it asked, For whose eyes, in the retired life I led, was all this finery? They who ask the question ought to recollect that I went out two days in the week; and if they were acquainted with the manners of what was at that time called the "bourgeois" of Paris, they would know that in this class there were thousands of women whose outlay on dress had no other object than an exhibition of a few hours on Sunday in the Tuileries and at church, and the pleasure of parading slowly along the street in which they lived in the view of their neighbors. Add to this, the family visits on the grand occasions of birthdays, New-Year's days, weddings and christenings, and there will be found sufficient opportunities for the gratification of vanity. More than one contrast, however, may be observed in.

my education. This little lady, exhibited on Sundays at church and in the public walks in a dress which you would have supposed to have alighted from a carriage, and whose demeanor and language were perfectly consonant with her appearance, would go to market with her mother on a week-day in a coarse stuff frock, or alone to the next greengrocer's to buy a little parsley or salad which the servant had forgotten. It must be confessed this was not very pleasing to me; but I showed no signs of dislike, and I acquitted myself of my commission so as to find in it amusement. I behaved with such civility, and at the same time with such dignity, that the mistress of the shop took pleasure in serving me first; yet those who came before me were not offended. I always found means to exchange some compliment, and grew only the more ceremonious and obliging. This little girl, who read serious works, could explain the circles of the celestial sphere, handle the crayon and the graver, and at the age of eight was the best dancer of a number of young persons older than herself assembled at some family feast, was frequently called to the kitchen to

make an omelet, pick herbs, or skim the pot. This mixture of serious studies, agreeable relaxations, and domestic cares, tempered by my mother's prudence, fitted me for all situations, and seemed to indicate a premonition of vicissitudes in my fortunes and to prepare me to endure them. In no occupation am I at a loss; I can prepare my own dinner as handily as Philopœmen cut his wood; but no one who saw me thus engaged would think it a suitable employment for me.

It may be supposed from what I have already related that my mother did not neglect what is termed religion. She was pious, without being a devotee; she was, or endeavored to be, a believer, and she conformed to the rules of the church with the humility and regularity of one whose heart, having need of the support of its main principles, troubles itself but little with its details. The reverential air with which the first notions of religion had been presented to me, had disposed me to consider them with attention. They were of a nature to make considerable impression on a lively imagination; and notwithstanding the embarrassments in which I was involved by my dawning

powers of reason, which regarded with surprise the transformation of the devil into a serpent, and thought it cruel in God to have permitted it, I at last believed and adored. I received confirmation with the thoughtfulness of a mind that considers the importance of its actions, and meditates on its duties. The preparing me for my first communion was talked of, and I felt myself penetrated with a pious awe. I read books of devotion; it was proper to direct my attention to the grand theme of eternal happiness or misery, and all my thoughts were insensibly turned to those points. Religious ideas soon gained a complete ascendency over my heart. The reign of sentiment, hastened thereby in my already forward constitution, commenced with the love of God, the sublime ecstasy of which graced and purified the years of my youth, and resigned me afterwards to the dominion of philosophy, and thus seems to have preserved me from the tempest of the passions, from which, endowed as I am with the vigor of an athlete, I with difficulty preserved my riper age.

This devotional turn worked an astonishing alteration in me. I became profoundly humble

and inexpressibly timid. I looked upon men with a sort of terror, which increased when any of them appeared to me attractive. I watched over my thoughts with extreme scrupulosity; the least profane image that offered itself to my mind, however confusedly, seemed to me a crime; I contracted such a habit of reserve, that, perusing, at sixteen, when I was no longer a devotee, Buffon's "Natural History" I skipped the article on Man, and passed over the accompanying plates with the speed and terror of a person beholding a precipice. In short, I did not marry till I was twenty-five; and with a heart such as may easily be imagined, with senses highly inflammable, and with considerable information as to several points, I had so well avoided all knowledge as to some others that I was surprised, as well as disillusionized, by the consequences of marriage.

My life, every day more retired, soon appeared to me still too worldly to think of venturing on my first communion. This important ceremony, which was to have such influence on my eternal salvation, occupied all my thoughts. I acquired a taste for the holy offices; their solemnity struck me. I read with avidity the

explanation of the ceremonies of the church; my mind was full of their mystic signification.

Every day I turned over my folios of the Lives of the Saints, and I sighed for those days when the persecuting fury of paganism obtained for courageous Christians the crown of martyrdom. I thought seriously of embracing a new kind of life, and, after profound meditations, I formed my project. Hitherto the bare idea of separation from my mother had been insupportable; and whenever, amusing herself with the sudden clouds with which sensibility overcast my expressive brow, she jested of convents and the necessity of young women residing in them for a while, torrents of tears would flow from my eyes. But what ought we not to sacrifice to the Lord? I had formed those grand or romantic ideas of the solitude and silence of the cloister which an active imagination would naturally engender. The more solemn its abode, the more it was adapted to the disposition of my inspired mind. One evening, after supper, being alone with my parents, I threw myself at their feet; tears choked my utterance; astonished, alarmed, they asked the meaning of my strange emotion. "I implore your consent,"

said I, sobbing, "to a proposal that rends my heart while I make it, but which my conscience demands of me. Place me in a convent." They raised me from the ground. My mother was moved; she would have shuddered at the idea of what might be the cause, but that, having lately been constantly about my person, she had nothing to dread. They inquired into the motives of this determination, observing, at the same time, that they had never refused me anything that was reasonable. I answered that it arose from a wish to prepare myself with due solemnity for my first communion. My father commended my zeal, and expressed his readiness to comply with my wishes. They deliberated on the choice of a house. My family had no relatives in any religious institution, but they recollected hearing my music-master speak of a convent in which he attended some young ladies of rank, and they resolved to make inquiries concerning it. They found it to be a respectable house, and of an order not very strict. The nuns had in consequence the reputation of not practising those extravagances and mummeries for which they are generally distinguished; besides, their

special occupation was the education of youth. They kept a day school for children of the lower class, whom they taught gratis, in conformity with their vows, in a hall set apart for the purpose; separate from this they had a boarding-school for such young women as were confided to their care.

My mother took the necessary steps, and after accompanying me to my aged relations, whom she informed of my resolution, which was highly commended by them, she conducted me to the sisterhood of the Congregation, *rue Neuve Saint Étienne, faubourg Saint Marcel,* near the very prison in which I am now confined. As I pressed my dear mother in my arms, separating from her for the first time in my life, my heart felt as if it would burst; but I obeyed the voice of God, and passed the threshold of the cloister, offering Him with tears the greatest sacrifice I could make. This was the seventh of May, 1765, when I was eleven years and two months old.

In the gloom of a prison, in the midst of those civil commotions which ravage my country and sweep away all that is dear to me, how shall I recall to my mind, how describe that period of rapture and tranquillity? What pencil can

depict the ecstatic emotions of a young heart endued with tenderness and sensibility, greedy of happiness, in which the feelings of nature began to awaken, and that perceived no other object but the Deity? The first night that I spent at the convent was a night of agitation. I was no longer under my parental roof; I was at a distance from that kind mother who was doubtless thinking of me with affectionate emotion. A dim light pervaded the chamber in which, with four children of my own age, I was to sleep. I rose softly from my bed, and went to the window: it opened upon the garden, which the moon enabled me to distinguish. The deepest silence prevailed; I listened to it, if I may so speak, with reverence. The lofty trees cast their gigantic shadows from space to space, and promised a secure asylum to calm meditation. I lifted my eyes to the heavens; they were serene and unclouded. I imagined that I felt the presence of the Deity smiling on my sacrifice, and already offering me its reward in the consolatory peace of a celestial abode. Tears of delight flowed gently down my cheeks. I repeated my vows with holy transport, and withdrew to taste the slumber of the elect.

As it was evening when I arrived, I had as yet not seen all the boarders. They were thirty-four in number, ranging from the age of six to that of seventeen or eighteen, united in one class, but divided between two tables at meals, and as it were into two sections in the course of the day, to perform their exercises. From the gravity of my appearance, it was judged proper, notwithstanding my youth, to place me among the oldest. I accordingly became the twelfth at their table, and was the youngest among them. The tone of politeness which my mother had taught me, the sedate air of which I had contracted a habit, my courteous and correct mode of speaking, in no way resembled the noisy and thoughtless mirth of my volatile companions. The children addressed themselves to me with a sort of confidence, because my nature would never suffer me to repulse them; the older girls treated me with a sort of respect, because my reserve, without rendering me less obliging to them, caused me to be distinguished by the sisters. Brought up as I had hitherto been, it was not surprising that I should be found better informed than most of my class, despite their superiority in years. The

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nuns perceived that they might derive honor from my education, from the simple circumstance of my being under their care, without its being necessary for them to take any pains to continue it. I knew already, or very easily learnt, all they were capable of teaching me. I became the favorite of the whole sisterhood; they contended who should caress and compliment me the most. The one whose office it was to teach the boarders to write was seventy years of age, and had become a nun at fifty in consequence of some misfortune. She had been well educated, and to this advantage was added that of good breeding and a knowledge of the world. She prided herself on her skill in instruction. She wrote a fine hand, embroidered with elegance, was versed in orthography, and not unacquainted with history. Her diminutive figure, her age, and a mixture of pedantry occasioned, however, this mother Sainte Sophie to be treated by her giddy little pupils with less respect than she merited. The jealousy of the sisters also, if I remember right, contributed to this effect; envious of talents which they did not possess, they were fond of holding her up to ridicule. This worthy nun, attracted by my

studious disposition, soon became attached to me. After giving a lesson to the class, she would take me aside, make me repeat my grammar, go over my maps, and question me upon history. She even obtained permission to take me to her cell, where she employed me in reading to her.

Of my former tutors I retained only one, my music-master, of whom I received lessons in the parlor, with two of my companions, under the inspection of a nun; and to continue my drawing I had a female tutor who was admitted for the purpose into the convent.

The regularity of a life occupied with a variety of pursuits, was perfectly suited to the activity of my mind, as well as to my natural taste for method and application. I was one of the first at everything; and still I had leisure because I was diligent, and lost not a moment of my time. In the hours of recreation I did not run and frolic with the crowd, but sat down alone under some tree to read or to meditate. How sensible was I to the beauty of the foliage, the breath of the zephyrs, and the perfume of the surrounding flowers! Everywhere I beheld the hand of the Deity; I saw His beneficent

cares; I admired His works. Moved with gratitude, I went to adore Him in the chapel, where the solemn tones of the organ, blended with the fresh voices of the young nuns chanting their anthems, completed my happiness. Independently of mass, to which all the boarders were regularly conducted in the morning, there was half-an-hour in the afternoon of ordinary days consecrated to meditation, to which those only were admitted who appeared capable of the seriousness requisite to the enjoyment of devotional reading. I had no need to solicit this favor, which they were eager to confer upon me as a recompense for my zeal; but I requested with fervor the privilege of receiving my first communion at the approaching solemnity, the Feast of the Assumption. Though this festival fell shortly after my entrance into the convent, the request was granted with the unanimous consent of the superiors and the Director. This Director, who was a man of good sense, was a monk of the monastery of St. Victor, where he officiated as *curé*. He had accepted, in addition, the office of confessor to the Congregation, an office for which his age (which was past fifty), his equable temper, his

austerity of morals and bearing, well fitted him. When I was confided to his care, M. Garat, the priest of my parish, took the trouble to come himself to the convent to deposit his tender lamb in the hands of this holy shepherd. They met in the parlor, where, from my being present, they conversed in Latin, a tongue of which I understood but little, though I comprehended a few words in my praise. These never escape the penetration of a female, however young she may be, or in whatever language they are uttered. I gained considerably by the change. Garat was a mere pedant, in whom I should have beheld the sternness of a spiritual judge; the monk of St. Victor was an upright and enlightened man, who directed my pious affections to all that is great and sublime in morality, and who took a pleasure in developing the germs of virtue through the instrumentality of religion, without any absurd mixture of its mysticism. I loved him as a father, and during the three years that he lived after my quitting the convent, I went regularly to St. Victor's, which was at a considerable distance, on the eve of each of the grand festivals, to confess myself to him.

It cannot be denied that the Catholic religion, though little suited to a sound judgment and an enlightened mind which is accustomed to subject the objects of its faith to the rules of reason, is well calculated to captivate the imagination, which it strikes by means of the grandiose and awful, while at the same time it captivates the senses by mystic ceremonies, alternately soothing and melancholy. Eternity, always present to the mind of its sectaries, calls them to contemplation. It renders them scrupulous appreciators of good and evil, while its daily practices and imposing rites contribute to relieve and support the attention, and offer the easy means of advancing towards the end proposed. Women are wonderful adepts in heightening these practices, or accompanying these rites with whatever can add to their charms and splendor; and nuns in particular excel in this art. A novice took the veil soon after my arrival at the convent. The church and the altar were decorated with flowers, with brilliant lustres, curtains of silk, and other superb embellishments. The gathering was numerous, and filled the space exterior to the altar with the gay and festive air of a wedding.

The young victim appeared at the grate triumphant, and adorned with the utmost pomp, of which, however, she soon divested herself, to appear again covered with a white veil, and crowned with roses. I still feel the agitation which her slightly tremulous voice occasioned me, when she melodiously chanted the customary verse, *Elegit, etc. : Here have I chosen my abode, and will establish it forever.* I have not forgotten the notes of this little anthem; I can repeat them as accurately as if I had heard them but yesterday. Would I could chant them in America! Great God, with what accents would I utter them! — When the novice had pronounced her vows, she was covered, as she lay prostrate on the ground, with a pall, under which one might have supposed her to be buried. I shuddered with terror. To me it represented the image of an absolute dissolution of every earthly tie, and the renunciation of all that was dear to her. I was no longer myself; I was the very victim of the sacrifice. I thought they were tearing me from my mother, and I shed torrents of tears. Endowed with this faculty of sensibility, which renders impressions so profound, and

occasions so many things to affect us vividly, that pass away like shadows before the eyes of the vulgar, our existence never grows listless. Accordingly I have reflected on mine from an early period, without having once found it a burden, even in the midst of its severest trials; and, though not yet forty, I may be said to have lived a prodigious age, if life be measured by the sentiment which has marked every instant of its duration.

I should have too many scenes of a similar nature to recount, were I to go over all which the emotions of a tender piety have engraven on my heart. The charm and habit of these sensations became so powerful as never to have been erased from it. Philosophy has dissipated the illusions of a chimerical faith; but it has not annihilated the effect of certain objects on my senses, or their association with the ideas and dispositions which they were accustomed to excite. I can still attend divine service with pleasure, if it be performed with solemnity. I forget the quackery of priests, their ridiculous fables and absurd mysteries, and see only weak mortals united together to implore the succor of the Supreme Being. The miseries of man-

kind and the consolatory hope of an omnipotent Repairer of the world's injustice occupy my thoughts. Every extraneous idea is excluded; the passions subside into tranquillity, and a sense of my duties is quickened. If music form a part of the ceremony, I find myself transported to another world, and I come away with a chastened heart from a place to which the ignorant and unreflecting crowd resort to adore a morsel of bread. It is with religion as with many other human institutions: it does not change the disposition of an individual, but assimilates itself to his nature, and is exalted or enfeebled accordingly. The herd of mankind think but little, believe on the hearsay of another, and act from instinct; so that there prevails a perpetual contradiction between the principles they admit, and the conduct they pursue. Strong minds proceed differently; they require consistency, and their actions are the index of their faith. In my infancy, I necessarily embraced the creed that was offered me: it was mine till my reason was sufficiently enlightened to examine it, and all my actions were strictly conformable thereto. I was astonished at the levity of those who, professing

a similar faith, acted in contradiction to it — in like manner as I now feel indignation against the cowardice of men who, desirous of having a country, set a value on life when it is to be risked in its service.

While I would avoid repetitions upon the same subject, I cannot help remarking a striking circumstance which took place upon my first communion. Prepared by all the means customary in convents, by retirement, long prayers, silence, and meditation, it was considered by me as a solemn engagement, and the pledge of eternal felicity. This idea completely absorbed me. It inflamed my imagination, and softened my heart to such a degree that, bathed in tears, and enraptured with divine love, I was incapable of walking to the altar without the assistance of a nun, who supported me by the arm and aided me to advance to the holy table. These appearances, which I in no respect sought to display, obtained me considerable credit, and all the good old women I met in my way recommended themselves to an interest in my prayers.

Methinks I hear the reader ask, as he finishes this paragraph, if this heart so tender, this

extreme sensibility, was not at length exercised on more real objects; and whether, having contemplated bliss at so early an age, I did not realize it in a passion, of which some individual shared with me the fruits?

To which I answer, let us not anticipate. Dwell with me a while on those peaceful days of holy delusion to which I still love to revert. Think you that, in an age so corrupted, in a social order so unjustly constituted, it is possible to taste the delights of nature and innocence? Vulgar souls find gross pleasures; others, whom these pleasures are insufficient to interest, excited by the illusions of passions, and coerced by severe and absurd injunctions, which they honor while they discharge, know scarcely any other delight than that of the dear-bought glory of fulfilling them. Let us confine our attention for the present to the mild and pure friendship which now offered me its charms, and to which I have been indebted for so many happy moments.

Some months had elapsed since my arrival at the convent. I spent my time there in the occupations I have already described. Once a week I was visited by my parents, who took me

with them on Sundays, after service, to walk in the *Jardin du Roi*, which is now the *Jardin des Plantes*. I never quitted them without shedding tears, which were caused by my love for them, and not by regret at my situation; for I reëntered with joy those tranquil cloisters, which I used slowly to traverse, the better to enjoy and drink in their solitude. Sometimes I would halt beside a tomb on which was inscribed the eulogy of some pious maiden. "She is happy!" I would exclaim with a sigh. Then a pleasing melancholy would pervade my soul which made me seek in the bosom of the Deity, and in the hope of being one day received into it, that felicity for which I longed.

The arrival of some new boarders caused a ripple of excitement in our little circle. Two young ladies from Amiens had been announced. The curiosity of the girls of a convent is more lively upon such occasions than one would imagine. It was on a summer's evening, and we were walking under the trees. "There they are! there they are!" was the sudden exclamation. The first mistress committed the strangers to the care of the nun whose business it was

to superintend the boarders. The crowd gathered round them, separated, returned again, and at length walked in groups in the same alley to examine them. They were two sisters of the name of Cannet. The elder was about eighteen, of a fine shape, easy and careless deportment, with a mixture at the same time of sensibility and pride that implied a dislike of her situation. The younger was scarcely more than fourteen; a veil of white gauze covered her mild countenance, and ill concealed the tears that bedewed it. I felt interested in her; I stopped to examine her more closely, and then mingled with the talkers to discover what they knew of her.

She was the favorite, it seemed, of her mother, whom she tenderly loved, and from whom it was so painful to her to be separated that her sister had been made to accompany her the better to reconcile her to the idea. Both were seated at supper at the same table with myself. Sophie, the younger, ate but sparingly. Her mute grief, so far from being repellent, could not fail to attract all who observed her. Her sister appeared less occupied in consoling her than in chafing over her own

hardships — and not altogether without reason. A girl of eighteen, banished from the gay world into which she had just entered, and condemned to the seclusion of a convent as the companion of her sister, she might well consider herself sacrificed by her mother, who had, indeed, been partly influenced by the hope of thus repressing a somewhat too vivacious temperament. It was not necessary to be long in the company of the lively Henriette to discover this. Frank even to brusqueness, impatient to irascibility, gay even to folly, she had the spirit of her age without any of its reason. Volatile, flighty, sometimes charming and often insupportable, her fits of temper were succeeded by the most affectionate atonements. She united extreme sensibility with the utmost extravagance of imagination. You could not avoid loving, even while you scolded her, yet it was difficult to live with her upon terms of endearment. Poor Sophie had much to suffer from the temper of her sister, who was irritated against her from feelings of jealousy, and yet was too just not to esteem her as she deserved, and consequently found in her connection with her everything that could con-

tribute to that inconstancy which she herself was the first to lament.

The sobriety of premature reason characterized Sophie. She did not feel acutely, because her head was cool and composed; but she loved to reason and reflect. She was sedate, without being prepossessing, and accordingly lacked the qualities that win the affections; but she was obliging to every one, as opportunity offered; and if she did not anticipate, she at least never refused compliance with the wishes of others. She was fond both of working and reading. Her sorrows had touched me. I was pleased with the manner in which she occupied her time; I felt that I had found in her a companion, and we became inseparable. I attached myself to her with that unreserve which flows from an impulse to love at first sight and entirely the object that appears to accord with us. Working, reading, walking, all my occupations and amusements were shared with Sophie. She was devout, with as much sincerity as myself, though a little less tenderness, which contributed to the intimacy of our union. It was, so to express myself, under the wing of Providence and in the transports of a common zeal,

that our friendship was cultivated: we wished mutually to encourage and assist each other in the path to perfection. Sophie was a tireless reasoner: she wanted to analyze, to discuss, to know everything. I talked much less than herself, and scarcely laid stress on anything but results. She took pleasure in conversing with me, for I was an adept at listening; and when I differed from her in opinion, my opposition was so gentle, for fear of offending her, that, in all the variety of our discussions, not the slightest quarrel has ever taken place between us. Her society was extremely dear to me, for I had need of intrusting to a person who could understand me the sentiments I felt, which seemed to be strengthened by being shared in. About three years older than myself, and a little less reserved, she had a sort of external advantage which I did not envy her. She prattled prettily and fluently; I knew only how to answer. It is true, people delighted to question me, but this was not a task that was easy to everybody. To my dear friend alone was I truly communicative; others had only, as it were, a glimpse of me, those excepted who were sufficiently skilful to lift up

the veil, which, without intending to hide myself, I naturally assumed.

Henriette was sometimes, but not often, of our party. She had formed a more *congenial* connection with a Mademoiselle de Cornillon, eighteen years of age, as ugly as sin, abounding in wit and malice, a proper hobgoblin to frighten children, but whose tricks would have been lost upon our maturer reason.

I cannot pass over in silence the tender affection that was shown me from my first arrival by an excellent girl, whose unfaltering attachment has afforded me consolation on more occasions than one. Angélique Boufflers, born to no inheritance, had taken the veil at the age of seventeen. She was still ignorant of her own character. Nature had formed her of the most inflammable materials; her suppressed energies exalted to the highest possible degree the sensibility of her heart and the vivacity of her mind. The want of fortune had caused her to be placed among the lay sisters, with whom she had nothing in common but the servility of their functions. There are minds which have no need of cultivation. Sainte Agathe (the convent name of this nun), without the aid

of education, was superior not only to her companions, but to most of the sisters of the choir. Her worth was known; and though, as is usual in these societies, where the majority are always ungrateful, they abused her good-nature by loading her with all sorts of drudgery, she enjoyed the respect which is due to merit. It was her office, at the time of which I am speaking, to wait upon the boarders. She had no assistant in this work, and had besides other cares confided to her; yet she discharged them all with equal diligence and cheerfulness. I had scarcely observed her, when she had already distinguished me by her attentions. Her kindness was the first circumstance that led me to notice her. At table she studied my taste, and sought to gratify it; in my chamber, she seemed to take a pleasure in making my bed, and never let an opportunity escape of saying something civil to me. If I met her, she embraced me with tenderness. Sometimes she would lead me to her cell, where she had a charming little bird, tame and caressing, and which she had taught to speak. She gave me even a secret key to this cell, that I might have access to it in her

absence. I read there all the books of which her little library was composed: the poems of Father du Cerceau, and some mystical works. When her avocations prevented her from spending any time with me, I was sure to find in her cell an affectionate little note, which I never failed to answer; she treasured up these missives like so many jewels, and showed them to me long afterwards carefully stored away in her desk. Presently the attachment of Sainte Agathe to the little Phlipon was the talk of the convent; but it was accepted quite as a matter of course, none of my companions taking offence at the favor accorded me. If any of the sisters spoke to her of her evident partiality, she would ask quite innocently if they would not do the same were they in her place; and when some austere devotee of fourscore, like Sister Gertrude, chided her for loving me too much, she would say that she, Sister Gertrude, thought so because she was herself incapable of such affection; "and yet even you," she would add, "never meet her without stopping her." Mother Gertrude would then turn away muttering between her teeth, yet half an hour after, she never failed, if she saw me, to give me a cake or some sweetmeats.

When the young Cannets arrived, and I attached myself to Sophie, Agathe appeared a little jealous, and it was a pleasure to the nuns to tease her upon the subject; but her generous affection did not diminish. She was at length satisfied that my friendship should be divided, and seemed to share the pleasure I felt from an intimacy with a person nearer my age, whose society I could enjoy every hour of the day. Agathe was then four-and-twenty. Her character and affection have inspired me with the sincerest regard for her, which I have frequently taken a pride in testifying.

During the last years of the existence of convents, it was she alone whom I went to visit in the convent of the Congregation. Having been obliged to quit it at a time when her age and infirmities rendered such an asylum necessary to her, and being reduced to the scanty pension assigned her, she vegetates at present at no great distance from the place of our ancient abode, or from the prison in which I am now confined; and in this situation, in the midst of the shame of her undeserved poverty, her only subject of lamentation is the captivity of her "daughter," for thus has she always called me. Ye com-

passionate souls, who feel for my situation, cease sometimes to pity me, in contemplating the blessings which heaven has preserved to me. In the midst of their power, my persecutors have not the felicity of being loved by an Agathe, to whom misfortune only renders the objects of her attachment the more dear.

The winter had passed away. During this season, I had seen my mother less frequently; but my father never suffered a Sunday to pass without visiting me and taking me to walk in the *Jardin du Roi*, if the weather would at all permit, where we braved the severity of the cold, tripping it gayly over the snow. Delightful walks! the remembrance of which was revived twenty years after upon reading these lines of Thomson,[1] which I never repeat without emotion:

Pleas'd was I, in my cheerful morn of life,
When nurs'd by careless solitude I liv'd,
And sung of nature with unceasing joy;
Pleas'd was I, wand'ring through your rough domain,
Through the pure virgin snows, myself as pure.

[1] Thomson's "Seasons" was the book slipped by Madame Roland into her pocket on the night of her imprisonment. This old favorite, with Plutarch, Tacitus, and Hume's "History of England," formed the little library of her cell.

It had been determined, upon my entrance into the convent, that I should remain there only a year. This I had desired myself, as I wished to see a limit to the sacrifice I had made in separating myself from my mother. The nuns also, on their part, when they consented to my receiving my first communion in the fourth month of my residence with them, had taken care to stipulate that I should not leave them the sooner on that account, and that I should complete the period agreed upon. This period having revolved, I was now to come out. My mother announced to me, that my grandmother Phlipon, who was extremely fond of me, had requested to have my company for a while. To this she had consented, conceiving that it would not be displeasing to me, as she would be able to see me there much more frequently than at the convent. This arrangement, besides, was perfectly suitable to circumstances. My father had been chosen to some office of his parish. On this account he was frequently from home, and then my mother was obliged to superintend the work intrusted to the young men, with which she had hitherto had no concern; so that she would have less

leisure to bestow upon me. The arrangement she proposed to me was a gentle transition from the absence I had lately experienced to a complete return to her, and I accepted it the more readily as I was attached to my grandmother. She was a graceful, good-humored little woman, whose agreeable manners, polished language, gracious smile, and coquettish glances, still hinted at some pretensions to please, or at least reminded us that she had been an object of admiration. She was sixty-five or sixty-six years of age, and not indifferent to dress, which she took care, however, should be suitable to her years; for she prided herself above all things on the study and observance of decorum. Being plump, light of foot, erect, with handsome little hands the fingers of which were gracefully displayed, and a tone of sentiment shaded with delicate gayety, the traces of age were almost imperceptible. She was a delightful companion to young persons, whose society pleased her, and by whom she was proud of being sought. Becoming a widow immediately upon the termination of the first year of her marriage, my father, born after the death of her husband, was her only child. Misfortunes in trade having

reduced her to distress, she had recourse to some rich relations, who employed her in the education of their children. Thus she had the care, in the house of Madame de Boismorel, of the son Roberge, of whom I shall speak in the sequel, as well as of her daughter, afterwards Madame de Favières.

A little estate, which fell to her by inheritance, having rendered her independent, she retired to the island of St. Louis, where she occupied a decent apartment with her sister, Mademoiselle Rotisset, whom she called by the name of Angélique. This worthy maiden, asthmatic and devout, pure as an angel and simple as a child, was the very humble servant of her elder sister. The affairs of the little household devolved entirely upon her. A charwoman attending twice a day to perform the more menial offices, Angélique was competent to the rest, and attended respectfully at the toilet of her sister. She naturally became my gouvernante, while Madame Phlipon was my tutor. Behold me, then, in their hands, after having quitted the house of the Lord, regretted, esteemed, and embraced by the whole sisterhood of nuns, wept over by my Agathe and my

Sophie, lamenting in turn my separation from them, and promising to mitigate its pains by the frequency of my visits.

This engagement was too dear to my heart not to be scrupulously fulfilled. My walks were frequently directed towards the Congregation. My aunt Angélique, as well as my father, took pleasure in accompanying me thither. The news of my arrival in the parlor being spread through the convent, I had presently a group of twenty about me. But these visits, after all, were poor substitutes for the daily and confidential intercourse of friendship. They became less frequent, and I had recourse to correspondence, carried on principally with Sophie. This was the origin of my taste for writing, and one of the causes which have rendered, from habit, the practice of it so easy to me.

II

August 28.

I FEEL my resolution to pursue these Memoirs deserting me. The miseries of my country torment me; the loss of my friends unnerves me; an involuntary gloom penetrates my soul and chills my imagination. France is become a vast Golgotha of carnage, an arena of horrors, where her children tear and destroy each other.

The enemy, favored by civil strife, advances in every quarter; the cities of the North fall into their power; Flanders and Alsace must become their prey; the Spaniard desolates Roussillon; Savoy rejects an alliance that would unite her to anarchy, and returns to her ancient tyrant, whose troops invade our frontiers; the rebels of la Vendée continue to lay waste a large extent of territory; the Lyonnese, wantonly provoked, have burst into open resistance; Marseilles flies to their succor; the disorder

spreads to the neighboring Departments; and in this universal agitation, and in the midst of these multiplied disorders, there is nothing consistent but the measures of the foreign powers, whose conspiracy against freedom and mankind our excesses have justified. Our government is a species of monster, whose form is as odious as its appetites are depraved; it destroys whatever it touches, and devours even itself. This last feature is the only consolation of its numerous victims.

The armies, ill conducted, and worse provided, alternately fly like cowards, and fight with the courage of despair. The ablest commanders are accused of treason, because certain Representatives, ignorant of war, blame what they do not comprehend, and brand as aristocrats all who are more enlightened than themselves. A legislative body, characterized by debility from the moment of its existence, presented us at first with lively debates, as long as it possessed sufficient penetration to foresee the national dangers, and courage to announce them. The just and generous spirits, who aspired to the welfare of their country and dared attempt to establish it, denounced au-

daciously under the most odious colors and in forms the most contradictory, have been at last sacrificed by ignorance and fear to intrigue and peculation. Chased from a body of which they were formed to be the soul, they left behind them an inane and corrupt minority, who have united the oppression of despotism with the license of anarchy, and whose follies and crimes dig their own tomb, while they are consummating the public ruin. The nation, cowardly and uninstructed, because egotism is indolent and indolence credulous and blind, has accepted a constitution essentially vicious, which, even if unexceptionable, it should still have rejected with indignation, because nothing can be accepted from villainy without degradation to the receiver. This deluded people boasts of security and freedom, while it has seen both violated with impunity in the persons of its Representatives![1] It can only change its tyrants. Already under a yoke of iron, every change seems to it an alleviation; but, incapable itself of accomplishing one, it supinely awaits it at the hands of the first master ambitious of ruling it. O Brutus,

[1] In the expulsion of the Girondists from the Convention, June 2, 1793.

whose daring hand freed in vain the degenerate Romans, like thee we have erred. Like thee, men pure and enlightened, whose ardent souls burned for liberty, and whom philosophy had trained for it in the calm of study and the austerity of seclusion, have flattered themselves that the fall of the despot would herald the reign of justice. Alas, it has been but the signal for the rule of the direst passions, and the most execrable vices! Thou saidst, after the proscriptions of the triumvirs, that the cause of the death of Cicero had filled thee with more shame than his death had occasioned thee grief; thou blamedst thy friends at Rome for having become slaves rather by their own fault than that of their tyrants, and accusedst them of the dastardliness of seeing and permitting things, of which the mere recital should have been insupportable to them and excited their horror.

Such is the indignation which I feel in my dungeon. But the hour of indignation is past; it is too evident that there is no good to be hoped nor additional evil to be feared. Never can history paint these dreadful times, or the monsters that fill them with their barbari-

ties. They surpass the cruelties of Marius, the atrocities of Sylla. The latter, inclosing and slaughtering six thousand men who had surrendered to him, near the senate, which he exhorted to proceed in its deliberations amidst the shrieks and groans of the victims, acted like a tyrant that abuses the power he has usurped. But to what can we compare the domination of those hypocrites, who, masking their ambition and avarice with the guise of justice, and converting the laws into snares for the innocent, have created a public tribunal as the engine of their personal vengeance, and send to the scaffold, with formalities mockingly judicial, every individual whose virtues offend them, whose talents excite their jealousy, or whose opulence tempts their cupidity. What Rome or Babylon ever equalled Paris, polluted with debauchery and blood, and governed by magistrates who profess to trade in falsehood and calumny, and to license assassination? What people has ever depraved its nature to the point of contracting a moral necessity of beholding executions, and of glutting its eyes with scenes of cruelty; of foaming with impatience and rage when the sanguinary scenes are retarded;

and of being ever ready to wreak its ferocity on whosoever shall attempt to calm and pacify its violence? The days of September were the sole work of a small number of human tigers drunk with wine and blood; those of the 31st of May and the 2d of June[1] marked the triumph of crime by the apathy of the Parisians, and their tame acquiescence in slavery. From this date crime and anarchy grow apace; the faction, called in the Convention the Mountain is but a band of robbers, aping in garb and language the dregs of the populace, preaching massacre, and setting the example of rapine. Crowds of people surround the courts of justice, and vociferate their threats against the judges, who are thought too tardy in the condemnation of innocence. The prisons are gorged with public functionaries, with generals, and private individuals of characters that graced and ennobled humanity. A zeal to accuse is received as a proof of civism, and the search and detention of persons of merit and property sum up the duties of an ignorant and unprincipled magistracy.

[1] The days of the Montagnard movement for "purging" the Convention of their Girondist opponents.

The victims of Orleans are fallen. Charlotte Corday has not produced the smallest movement in a city which did not merit that she should free it from a monster. Brissot,[1] Gensonné, and a multitude of other deputies remain under the decree of accusation; the deficiency of proofs but augments the animosity against them, and the will of the people, who impatiently expect their heads as a wild beast awaits its prey, supplies the want of reasons for their condemnation. Custine[2] is no more; Robespierre triumphs; Hébert points

[1] Some women assembled in the church of St. Eustatius, said one day, setting up a howl, that they must have the head of Brissot, without permitting the judges to use in his trial the same tedious process which had retarded the execution of Custine. Two thousand persons surrounded the court the day that judgment was pronounced on this general, trembled lest he should escape their hatred, and declared aloud, that if he were absolved, he must be treated like Montmorin, and with him all the traitors that lay in the prisons.

[2] His entire property was confiscated. His daughter-in-law, a young and charming woman, at that time pregnant, who divided her days between her father-in-law, dragged to the tribunal, and her husband detained unjustly, was imprisoned immediately after the execution of the former, and in consequence miscarries. What does that signify to these monsters? The public accuser had received of her 200,000 livres to save innocence: he returns them, and then causes her to be arrested, who might denounce his infamous procedure.

out his victims; Chabot registers them; the Tribunal is assiduous in its work of death, and the populace prepares to accelerate and multiply executions. Meanwhile, famine rears its head; pernicious laws discourage industry, stop circulation, and annihilate commerce; the finances fall to decay; the disorganization becomes general; and in this wreck of the public wealth, men devoid of shame erect their fortunes from the fragments of national prosperity, set a price on all their actions, and traffic in the lives of their fellow-citizens.

Dillon and Castellane obtain their release, the one from the prison of the Madelonettes, the other from that of Sainte Pélagie, by the payment of thirty thousand livres to Chabot. Sillery stands cheapening his liberty, which he is rich enough to purchase, and two hundred bottles of his excellent champagne are the overplus of the bargain struck with the *strumpets* of the committee.[1] The wife of Roland, pointed

[1] The money and wine were received, but Sillery obtained only the liberty of seeing and discoursing with whom he pleased. With this mitigation of his imprisonment he is still confined in the Luxembourg. Three or four abandoned women, belonging to the infamous wretches of the Committees of Public and General Safety, form a board of trade, with which every individual of any distinction must treat for his security.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY

FROM BAUDRY'S PAINTING, AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY HAUER

out by *père* Duchesne to the fury of the populace, awaits its last excess in the same prison from which the mistress of a forger of assignats departs unmolested, after having purchased the safety of herself and her accomplice. Henriot, having ascended to the command of the National Guard, through the honorable gradation of lackey, bailiff's clerk, and assassin at St. Firmin, breaks seals, empties cellars, and removes furniture with equal shamelessness and insolence. Charged with the care of the deputies detained in the Luxembourg, he presumes to intrude into their presence purposely to insult them, deprives them by force of pens, books, and papers, and adds menace to his outrages. The subordination of authorities is become a fiction, which it is not permitted to name without incurring the accusation of incivism, and drawing upon one's head the imputation of counter-revolutionary principles. The fugitive deputies,[1] alas! have they at length escaped from this inhospitable land, which devours the virtuous and the sage, and drenches itself with their blood? O my friends! may propitious fate conduct you to the United States, the only

[1] The Girondists, among them Roland and Buzot.

asylum of freedom! My wishes would conduct you thither, and I ardently hope that you are now actually on your passage. But what remains for me? I shall see you no more, and while for your sakes I rejoice in your removal, I lament in it our eternal separation. And thou, my revered spouse and companion, enfeebled by premature old age, eluding with difficulty the pursuit of the assassins, shall I be permitted to see thee again, and to pour consolation into thy soul, steeped as it must be in bitterness and despair? How long must I remain a witness of the desolation of my native land, and the degradation of my countrymen? Oppressed by these mournful reflections, I have given way for a moment to my grief; a few tears have escaped from my weary lids, and I have laid aside the light pen which has been retracing the memories of bygone, happier years.

Let me once more try to recall them and to follow their course. My simple story may one day serve to cheer the solitary hours of some captive as unhappy as myself, who may forget his own sorrows in commiserating mine —or perchance some poet or romancer, desir-

ing to paint the human heart, may find in my recital elements not unworthy of study.

Not many days will probably elapse before the want of provisions, exasperating the populace, will urge them to tumults, which the agitators will take care to foment. The tenth of August was near being a commemoration of the ides of September. The day before yesterday their renewal was menaced, should Custine be acquitted. The Cordeliers already proclaim the necessity of getting rid of all suspected persons, and punishments are decreed against such as presume to disapprove of those "glorious days." What is this but to prepare a repetition of them? The persons sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal are not criminals referred thither to be judged, but victims whom it is ordered to immolate. Those who are imprisoned for anything but crime are not under the safeguard of the law; on the contrary, abandoned to suspicion and calumny, they are exposed to the blind fury of the populace, from which they are not a moment secure. Let us avert our eyes from this lamentable epoch, to which the reign of Tiberius alone can be compared, and let us

return to the blissful moments of my tranquil youth.

I had completed my twelfth year, and the thirteenth was passed under the care of my grandmother. The quiet of her house, and the piety of my aunt Angélique, admirably accorded with the tender and contemplative disposition I had indulged in the convent. Every morning Angélique accompanied me to church to hear mass, where I soon attracted the attention of those apostles of abnegation who court the favor of God by peopling the cloisters. The Abbé Géry, with his wry neck and downcast eye, accosts the person whom he supposes to be my gouvernante, to congratulate her on the edification produced by the example of her pupil, and to express the joy he should feel in being chosen her conductor in the ways of the Lord. He learned with regret that the grand ceremonies had been already performed, and that I had chosen my confessor. He then begged me to tell him if I had no project respecting my future destination, no plan of withdrawing myself from the pomps and vanities of the world; and received for answer that I was yet too

young to determine my vocation. Géry sighed, addressed a number of fine things to me, and did not fail to meet us on our return and to repeat his compliments. The piety of my young heart was not of a nature to be gratified with jesuitical affectations; it was too sincere to unite with the absurdities of fanaticism, and the wry neck of Monsieur Géry was as little to my taste. I had nevertheless a secret design of consecrating myself to the religious life. St. François de Sales, one of the most amiable saints in Paradise, had made a conquest of my heart, and the ladies of the Visitation, of which he was the founder, were already my sisters by adoption. But I judged that, being an only child, I should not gain the consent of my parents during my minority, and I was not willing to occasion them unnecessary pain by any premature disclosure of my sentiments. Besides, should it happen that when put to the proof my resolution should be shaken, it would be furnishing arms to the ungodly against the holy vocation. I resolved, therefore, to conceal my intention, and to proceed in silence to my object. I put to contribution the little library of my grandmother; and the Philotée

of St. François de Sales and the Manual of St. Augustine became my favorite studies. What doctrines of love, what delicious aliment for the innocence of a fervent soul abandoned to celestial illusions! The controversial writings of Bossuet were a new food to my mind: favorable as they were to the cause which they defended, they sometimes contained objections to it, and thus set me on weighing my belief. This was my first step in the path of doubt; but it was infinitely remote from the scepticism at which in a course of years I was destined to arrive, after having been successively Jansenist, Cartesian, Stoic, and Deist. What a route, to terminate at last in patriotism, which has conducted me to a dungeon! In the midst of all this devotion, some old books of travels and a store of mythology served to amuse my imagination; while the letters of Madame de Sévigné established my taste.[1] Her charming facility, her elegance, her vivacity, her tender-

[1] They also were the models upon which Madame Roland formed her later and less sententious epistolary style, as her charming and vivacious letters to Bosc, given in his edition of her works, attest. The partial Bosc says in his Preface: "As a letter-writer she was superior in my opinion to a Sévigné or a Maintenon. . . ."

ness made me enter into her intimacy. I became acquainted with her society; I was as familiarized with her manners and surroundings as if I had lived with her.

My grandmother saw little company, and seldom went out; but her agreeable pleasantry animated the conversation when I occupied myself at her side in the little tasks which she took pleasure in teaching me. Madame Besnard, my great-aunt, who had taken care of me while an infant at nurse, came every afternoon to pass an hour or two with her sister. Her austere character gave her a solemnity of manners and an air of ceremony which Madame Phlipon would occasionally rally, but so tenderly as not to give offence, and was generally repaid by her sister in some plain but sound truth, a little abruptly expressed, of the bluntness of which her excellent heart pleaded the apology. My grandmother, who attached the highest value to the graces and to all that embellishes social life, was extremely sensible of the complaisance which my gentle temper and desire of pleasing all about me, and her own amiable manners in particular, inspired me with towards her. She would sometimes pay me a com-

pliment; and when, which was generally the case, I replied with readiness and propriety, she was overcome with satisfaction, and would cast a triumphant look at Madame Besnard, who, shrugging her shoulders, would seize the first moment of my removal to another part of the room, to say in a low voice, but which I heard very distinctly, "You are really insupportable; she will be spoiled; what a pity!" My grandmother took no other notice of this than to assume a posture more upright than before, assuring her sister, with an air of superiority, that she knew very well what she was about; and the worthy Angélique, with her pale visage and prominent chin, her spectacles on her nose, and her knitting in her hands, would tell them both that there was no danger to be apprehended, that it was impossible for anything to spoil me, and that my prudence was so exemplary that I might almost be left to my own guidance. This Aunt Besnard, however, so precise in her manners and so apprehensive of the effects of flattery, gave herself the utmost concern at my lying on a hard bed, and if I felt the slightest indisposition would never fail to call twice a day to inform herself

of its progress. What undisguised inquietude, what anxious cares did she not display on these occasions? And how delightful was their contrast with her ordinary reserve and severity! In truth, it seemed as if heaven had surrounded me with such affectionate friends, purposely to render my heart of all others the most tender and susceptible.

My grandmother one day took it into her head to pay a visit to Madame de Boismorel, either for the pleasure of seeing her, or of displaying her little daughter. Great preparations in consequence; long toilet in the morning: at length behold us setting off with Aunt Angélique for the *rue Saint-Louis, au Marais*, where we arrived about noon. On entering the house every one, beginning with the *portier*, salutes Madame Phlipon with an air of respect and affection, emulous who shall treat her with the greatest civility. She repays their attention with courtesy, tinged at the same time with dignity. So far very well; but her granddaughter is perceived; and, not satisfied with pointing her out to one another, they proceed to pay her a number of compliments. I began to feel embarrassed, from a sentiment I could

not well explain, that, while servants might look at and admire me, it was not their business to compliment me. We go on; a tall lackey announces us, and we enter the *salon*, and find the lady seated, with her lap-dog beside her, upon what we called then, not an *ottomane*, but a *canapé*, gravely embroidering tapestry. Madame de Boismorel was about the age, the height, and the figure of my grandmother; but her dress betokened the pride of wealth, rather than taste; and her countenance, far from expressing any plebeian desire to please, plainly demanded that all attention should be bestowed upon herself, and manifested her consciousness of deserving it. A rich lace, puckered into the form of a small bonnet, with broad wings pointed at the extremity like the ears of a hare, was perched upon the top of her head, that it might not conceal her perhaps borrowed hair, which was itself dressed with that affected discretion one must assume at sixty years of age. The rouge, spread one layer over another, lent to eyes naturally dull a much greater air of fierceness than was sufficient to make me fix mine upon the ground.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Rotisset, good morning

to you," cried, in a loud and cold tone, Madame de Boismorel, as she rose to meet us. ("*Mademoiselle!*" So my grandmother is mademoiselle in this house.) "Upon my honor I am very glad to see you. And this pretty child is your granddaughter? She will make a fine woman. Come here, my dear, sit down by my side. She is a little bashful. What age is your daughter, Mademoiselle Rotisset? She is a little brown to be sure, but she has a very good skin; she will grow fairer; and then what a shape! I will lay my life that hand must be a lucky one. Did you never venture in the lottery?"

"Never, madame; I am not fond of gaming."

"So, so! very likely indeed! At your age children are apt to think their game is sure. What an admirable voice she has, so soft, and yet rich! She is so grave too: I suppose you have a devotional turn?"

"I know my duty to God, and I endeavor to fulfil it."

"That is a good girl! You wish to take the veil: is it not so?"

"I do not know my future destination, and I do not seek to pry into it."

"Upon my word, very pretty, and very sen-

tentious! Your granddaughter is a great student, I dare say, Mademoiselle Rotisset?"

"She likes nothing so well as reading; she employs a part of every day in it."

"Oh! I was sure of that. But have a care she does not become a blue-stocking; that would be a thousand pities."

The conversation next turned upon the family and friends of the mistress of the house. My grandmother asked very respectfully for the uncle, and the cousin, and the daughter-in-law, and the son-in-law, the Abbé Langlois, Councillor Brion, M. Parent, the rector. They talked of the health of all these people, their pedigrees, and their eccentricities — for example of Madame Roudé, who, notwithstanding her great age, was still absurd enough to pretend to a fine bosom, and accordingly greatly exposed this part of her person, except when she got in and out of her carriage, for which occasion she had always an immense handkerchief ready in her pocket, because, as she observed, it is not decent to make such an exhibition to the footmen. During this dialogue, Madame de Boismorel sometimes took some stitches in her work, sometimes patted her little dog, but most fre-

quently looked hard at me. I took care not to meet her eyes, because it was unpleasant to me; but I looked round upon the furniture and decorations of the apartment, which were to me a more pleasing spectacle than the lady: and as I looked, my blood coursed more rapidly, I felt my color rise, my heart beat, and my breath come short.

I did not at this age ask myself, why my grandmother did not sit upon the *canapé*, or for what reason in particular Madame de Boismorel always called her "*Mademoiselle*" Rotisset; but I had the feeling that led to this reflection, and I saw the end of the visit with joy, as if I were just liberated from some hard confinement.

"Good-by! Do not forget to buy me a ticket in the lottery, and let your granddaughter choose the number, do you hear, Mademoiselle Rotisset? I am sure it will be a lucky one. One embrace: and you my little heart; do not look so much on the ground. Your eyes are meant to see with; and even one's confessor does not forbid us to open them. Ah! Mademoiselle Rotisset, you will have many a fine bow made you, take my word for that. Good morning, ladies."

Saying this, Madame de Boismorel rings her

bell, orders Lafleur to call in two days at Mademoiselle Rotisset's for a lottery ticket she is to send her, chides her dog for barking, and seats herself quietly upon her *canapé* before we are out of the room.

From Madame de Boismorel's we walked home in silence, and I hastened to my books, eager to forget what was past, and no better pleased with the compliments of the lady than of her servants. My grandmother, neither vexed nor pleased, talked sometimes of her and her singularities; of the rooted selfishness which had made her reply that "children were but secondary considerations," when my grandmother once took the liberty to remind her of the interest of hers, for the purpose of checking her prodigal expense; and of that familiarity in her manners, common enough with ladies of the great world, that made her receive her confessor and others at her toilet, and change her chemise and do other little offices in their presence. This style of behavior struck me as strange; I was glad to make my grandmother talk about it, but I kept to myself my own thoughts on the matter, thinking it would not perhaps be becoming in me to divulge them.

A fortnight later Madame de Boismorel's son, whom we had not seen at her house, called upon us. He was a man of about thirty-seven, of a pleasing countenance and polished address. His glance was swift and penetrating, his eye very open and somewhat too large, and his deep and manly, yet well modulated voice, betokened sincerity of soul and a politeness that was not merely external. He addressed my grandmother with deference, and me with that air of marked courtesy which sensible men preserve toward young people of my sex. The conversation was easy, yet sufficiently circumspect. M. de Boismorel did not neglect to allude gracefully to his obligations to my grandmother's care and kindness, while delicately hinting at the same time that Providence had rewarded her for the pains she had bestowed upon the children of others by the satisfaction she might expect to enjoy in so promising a child of her own family.

I found M. de Boismorel infinitely more amiable than his mother, and I was delighted whenever he called upon us, which was generally every two or three months. He had married at an early age a charming woman, by whom he

had an only son, whose education occupied a considerable portion of his thoughts. He had undertaken it himself, and was desirous of directing it on philosophical lines, in which he was not a little thwarted by the prejudices of his mother, and the enthusiastic devotion of his wife. He was accused of singularity; and as his nerves had been affected in consequence of some inflammatory disorder, the old countesses, the learned judges, and the sagacious abbés of his family, or of his mother's acquaintance, ascribed to a derangement of the brain the conduct he pursued in the education of his son. These circumstances being made known to me interested me in his character. I found that this man argued with extreme pertinency, and I began to suspect that there were two sorts of reason, so to express myself, one for the closet, and another for the world, — a morality of principle and a morality of practice, from the contradiction of which resulted so many absurdities, of which some were too glaring to escape my attention; in short, that persons of the gay world called everybody insane who was not affected like themselves with the common insanity: and thus did materials for

reflection insensibly accumulate in my active brain.

My grandmother sometimes contrasted the sentiments and behavior of M. de Boismorel with those of his sister, Madame de Favières, with whom she was little pleased, and whom her brother had found it necessary to remind that Mademoiselle de Rotisset was their own relation — a circumstance, said I to myself, that the mother did not seem less willing to overlook or forget. To my great satisfaction, my grandmother never expressed a wish to present me to Madame de Favières; indeed she was so well aware of my thoughts upon the subject that we did not even pay a second visit to Madame de Boismorel.

My father had vacated his office; the year to be spent with my grandmother had elapsed; I returned to the arms of my mother. But it was not without regret that I left this pleasant retreat in the Isle of Saint Louis, those agreeable quays where I was accustomed to take the air with my Aunt Angélique in the serene summer evenings, contemplating the windings of the stream and the distant landscape. I was especially fond of the quays which, in my zeal

to seek the temple and pour out my soul at the foot of the altar, I have traversed without meeting in the solitary path a single object to distract my meditations. The gayety of my grandmother brightened the home in which I had spent so many cheerful and peaceful days. I quitted her with a flood of tears; nor was my attachment to my mother, whose merit was of a higher description, but whose manners inspired greater awe, able to divert my regret. Till that moment I had never ventured upon any comparison with respect to my mother that tended in any way to lessen her; but I now felt a confused sense of that tendency. Child of the Seine, I had from my infancy resided on its banks; but the situation had not the solitary calm of my grandmother's. The moving pictures of the Pont-Neuf varied the scene every moment, and I entered literally as well as figuratively into the world, when I returned to my paternal roof. A free air, however, and an unconfined space, offered an ample source of amusement to my romantic and vagrant imagination. How many times from my window, which fronted the north, have I contemplated with ravishing emotion the vast expanse of

CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES

FROM AN OLD PRINT

heaven, its proud azure dome, stretching its canopy from the cool blue east far behind the Pont-au-Change to the west, still warm with the glow of the setting sun, and tingeing the trees and roofs of Chaillot! Never did I fail to bestow a few moments on this ravishing spectacle at the close of every fine day, and often have tears of joy silently flowed down my cheeks, while my heart, swelling with an inexpressible sentiment, happy in the idea and the sense of existence, offered to the Supreme Being a tribute of gratitude, pure and worthy of His acceptance. I know not if sensibility of heart sheds a more vivid hue on every object it beholds, or if certain sensations, that yet appear to contain nothing remarkable, contribute powerfully to develop it, or if both be not reciprocally cause and effect; but when I retrace the events of my life, I am doubtful whether to assign to circumstances or to my character that variety and plenitude of affections which have marked it so strongly, and left me so clear a remembrance of all the situations in which I have been placed.

Cajon had continued to instruct me in music. He was fond of reasoning with me on the

theory, or rather the technique of his art, for, though he pretended to be a composer, he understood little of mathematics and less of metaphysics; but he was ambitious of teaching me all he knew. My coldness in singing was a source of almost as much regret, as my facility in pursuing a train of argument was of astonishment to him. "Put soul into it!" he would continually exclaim: "you sing an air as nuns chant an anthem." The poor man did not perceive that I had too much soul to express it in a song: to give full expression to a tender passage of music would have embarrassed me as much as to have done dramatic justice to the sentiments of Eucharis and Erminia, while reading aloud to my mother of the loves and sorrows of those heroines. I became transformed, it is true in a way, into the heroine herself; but I could not mimic her; I entered into her feelings, my respiration was quickened, my voice grew tremulous, but this was all. It was impossible for me to express the sentiment with scientific tune, and a *sostenuto* voice: I had no idea like that of resolving to be impassioned. Mignard, whose Spanish politeness gained him the esteem of my grandmother, had begun

at her house his lessons on the guitar, which he continued when I returned to my father's. The simple accompaniments did not cost me much effort. Mignard took delight in making me excel on the instrument, and in the end I surpassed my master. This poor man quite lost his head, as will appear later on. Mozon was recalled to perfect my dancing, as was "M. Doucet" to improve me in arithmetic, geography, writing, and history. My father made me resume the graver, confining me to a small branch of the art, to which he thought to attach me by the tie of interest; for having enabled me to be useful to him, he employed me upon some trifling works of which I was to share with him the profit at the end of the week, according to an account of them which he engaged me to keep. But I was soon weary of this; nothing was so insipid to me, as to engrave the edge of a watch-case, or to ornament an *étui*, and I was better pleased to read an agreeable author than to buy myself a riband. I did not conceal my disgust, and as no constraint was laid upon me, I locked up the implements, and have never touched them since. I went out every morning with my mother to

attend mass, after which we sometimes made our purchases; then succeeded the lessons of my several masters, and these being finished, after an interval of recreation I retired to my closet to read, to write, and to meditate. The long evenings made me return to my needle-work, during which my mother had the complaisance to read to me for hours together. These readings gave me great pleasure; but as they did not permit me to digest what was read so perfectly as I wished, the idea suggested itself to me of making extracts. Accordingly my first employment in the morning was to consign to paper what had struck me most forcibly the preceding evening; and this done, I resumed the book to recover the connection, or to copy a passage that I was desirous of having entire. This grew into a habit, a necessity, a passion. My father's small library having long since been exhausted, I borrowed and hired books, and I could not bear the idea of returning them till I had digested what I had conceived to be the best of their contents. In this manner I studied Pluche, Rollin, Crevier, Père d'Orléans, St. Réal, Abbé de Vertot, and Mézeray, who so little resembles him, and whom I conceived to be the

dryest author I had ever read; but his subject was the history of my country, and with this I was anxious to be acquainted.

My grandmother Bimont was dead. My little uncle, of St. Bartholomew, advanced to a higher office than that of master of the choir, boarded with the first vicar, the Abbé le Jay, who lived very well, and we were accustomed to call upon him on Sundays and other festivals after service.

The Abbé le Jay was what is called a good-natured old man, as thick in his person as in his wit, a poor preacher, a worse confessor, a casuist, and I know not what beside. But he knew how to manage affairs of interest, and had succeeded so well as to establish his two brothers as notaries at Paris, where they made a figure in their profession, which was at that time a reputable and lucrative one. To manage his house he had one of his relations, a Mademoiselle d'Hannache, a tall, skeleton figure, dry and sallow, shrill of voice, proud of her descent, and boring everybody with her talent for economy and her genealogical parchments. She was a woman, however, and that is always sufficient to enliven the house of a

priest; and she had the art of furnishing the table of her cousin with elegance and profusion, matters in which he was a great connoisseur. The Abbé found it extremely agreeable to have a boarder in his house of the amiable disposition of my uncle Bimont: his table was more gay, Mademoiselle d'Hannache better tempered, and his backgammon assured. In our visits my mother and this cousin were partners against the Abbé and my uncle. I appeared to be deserted; but I accommodated myself admirably to this arrangement; for the Abbé received his company in a large library, which I put under contribution according to my fancy and taste. This was a fund upon which I drew till the period of his death, which was about three years after. One of his brothers having gotten into trouble of some kind, the Abbé lost his senses, languished for about six weeks, threw himself out of a window, and was killed by the fall. Mademoiselle d'Hannache, at that time at law for the inheritance of her uncle, "the captain," was accommodated in the house of my mother, and resided with us nearly a year and a half. During this interval I was her secretary; I wrote her letters, copied her precious

genealogy, drew up the petitions she presented to the president and the attorney-general of the Parliament of Paris, the administrators of some annuities bequeathed by a M. de Saint-Vallier to females of rank in reduced circumstances, and accompanied her sometimes in her solicitations to various persons, which her affairs made necessary. I observed upon these occasions that, notwithstanding her ignorance, her illiterate language, her starched manners, her old-fashioned dress, and her other absurdities, she was treated with respect on account of her pedigree. They listened with attention to the names of her ancestors, which she never failed to enumerate, and were ready to side with her in her claims to the disputed inheritance. I could not but contrast this honorable treatment with the reception I had met with at Madame de Boismorel's, which had left a deep impression on my mind. It was impossible to conceal from myself my superiority to Mademoiselle d'Hannache, who, with all her genealogy and her forty years to boot, could not write a letter that was either legible, or dignified with a word of common sense; and I thought mankind extremely unjust, and the institutions of society extravagantly absurd.

But let us see for a moment what became of my friends of the convent. From Agathe I received, now and then, a letter of that tender description that particularly characterizes those plaintive doves whose affections are not to extend beyond the limits of friendship. With these missives she used to send little gifts, bon-bons, pincushions, pretty boxes, etc., whenever she had an opportunity to do so. I went sometimes to see her. Once I was even admitted to the convent to witness a little *fête* in honor of the Mother Superior, a privilege begged as a great favor from the Archbishop, and of the honor of which I was of course duly conscious. When I arrived, all was astir; the young ladies were in their best, the hall was adorned with flowers, the refectory was loaded with dainties. It must be owned that, while there was a touch of childishness in the sports of these poor nuns, this was nevertheless atoned for by a certain ingenuous grace and lovableness native to the temperament of women, to the sprightliness of their fancy, the artlessness of their bearing — so long, indeed, as they are not under the eye of a sex whose presence makes them reserved, when it does not quite

turn their heads. A short drama, trifling enough as a composition, it is true, but animated by the gayety and the sweet voices of the players, came first upon the programme; sportive dances followed; an arch laugh, a pleasantry, its effect heightened by the habitual gravity of the jester, lent an almost saturnalian character to the merriment of these simple sisters and their flock. The convent physician arrives to visit some patients. Of course he must see these wonders; he is escorted under a cloister trimmed with green wreaths, where a sort of fair is in progress, the young novices selling ballads, others distributing sweetmeats, this one drawing a lottery, that telling fortunes, on the one side the smaller pupils with baskets of fruit, on the other a concert. At sight of his doctoral wig the scene changes suddenly: the novices lower their veils; the older girls look hastily to the arrangement of their dress; the younger grow demure; I myself hold my guitar with a less negligent air. It was suspended by a ribbon passed over the shoulder. They had wished me to play, and the scenes around me had inspired a couplet or two, indifferent in themselves, but productive, from their appropri-

ateness, of the most happy effect. Cajon himself would have been satisfied with the manner in which I sang them: I had no sentiments to express but those to which I could abandon myself, and my accents were unrestrained. I was desired to repeat them before the physician: this was a very different affair; the voice was less sure, and the expression, as it were, veiled. Some mischievous sister remarked the alteration, adding at the same time that my manner was so much the more interesting. The doctor withdrew: the joy became general at his departure, though there was no one there but would have wished him to be admitted.

Sophie had returned to her family at Amiens. Previously to her departure an interview had taken place between our mothers. They had consecrated, if I may so speak, our connection, had mutually applauded our choice, and smiled at the promises never to forget each other, of which we had made them the witnesses. These promises, however, in spite of circumstances, have proved, as will be seen hereafter, less fleeting than was imagined. My correspondence with this friend of my affections became extremely regular. I wrote to her always once

a week, and generally twice. "And what," methinks I hear it asked, "could you have to relate?" Everything I saw, everything I thought, everything I felt; and surely I had subjects enough! These communications grew daily more fluent, more entertaining. By communicating my reflections I learned the better to reflect; deriving a pleasure from sharing what I acquired, I studied with the more ardor; finding it amusing to describe, I observed what was passing with the greater attention. The letters of Sophie were less frequent; a numerous family, a crowded house, the demands of society, and the very nature of a provincial life, occupied by trifles, by unmeaning visits, and of which a great part is necessarily devoted to cards, gave her neither the leisure to write, nor the opportunity to collect materials. For this reason probably she affixed the greater value to my letters and thereby induced me to continue them.

The death of the Abbé le Jay having deprived me of the use of his library, in which I had found historians, mythologists, fathers of the church, and literati — for instance, Catrou and Rouillé, who call Horatius Cocles a "*généreux*

borgne;" Maimbourg, of a taste equally elevated; Berruyer, who has written the history of the people of God in the same style in which Bitaubé has composed the poem of Joseph; the chevalier de Folard, of a character totally different, and whose military details appeared to me much more rational than the reflections of the Jesuits; the Abbé Bannier, who amused me much more than the Abbé Fleury; Condillac and Père André, whose metaphysics, applied to eloquence, and to the beautiful of every species, gave me singular delight; some poems of Voltaire, and the moral essays of Nicole; the Lives of the Fathers in the Wilderness, and that of Descartes by André Baillet; Bossuet's Discourse on Universal History; the letters of St. Jérôme, the romance of Don Quixote, with a thousand others equally congruous — this resource, I say, failing me, I was fain to have recourse to the circulating libraries. My father, being ill qualified to select, asked for whatever I indicated to him. My choice was chiefly directed to those works of which I had gained some knowledge, either by means of criticisms or extracts in the books I had already read. In this way I was led to translations of the ancient

historians, Diodorus Siculus, for instance, and others. I was desirous of reviewing the history of my country in some other writer than Mézeray; I accordingly chose the Abbé Velly and his continuators, the latter less interesting than himself, in periods, too, where, with his talents, they might have been more so. From the same source I read Pascal, Montesquieu, Locke, Burlamaqui, and the principal French dramatists. I had no plan, no system, in these readings; my sole view was instruction and knowledge. I felt a sort of necessity of exercising my mind, of gratifying my serious tastes. I panted for happiness, and I could find it only in the development of my faculties. I know not what I might have been, if placed in the hands of a skilful preceptor; but it is not improbable that, fixing my attention upon a single subject, I might have extended some branch of science, or acquired superior talents. But should I have been better or more useful? That is a question which I leave to be resolved; it is certain I could not have been happier. I know of nothing that can at all be compared to that plenitude of life, of peace, of satisfaction, to those days of innocence and study. They were not, however,

unmixed with trouble. Is the life of man upon earth ever exempt from it?

I had commonly upon my hands many books at once, some serving for studies, others for recreation. Extended historical compositions, as I have already observed, were read aloud in the evenings, which were now almost the only times when I sat with my mother. The day was spent in the solitude of the closet, where I devoted myself to my extracts, to reflection, or other less serious occupations. In the holidays of spring we went to the public walks, or my father accompanied me to those exhibitions of pictures and other productions of art which, in those times of luxury and of the species of prosperity that belongs to it, were so numerous at Paris. Such visits were a source of gratification to him, since they afforded him an opportunity of displaying his superiority by pointing out to me what he understood better than myself; and the taste he observed in me was the more pleasing, as he conceived it to be the fruit of his own instructions. This was our point of contact, in which we were truly in unison. My father had his share of vanity, and it was evident enough that he was not displeased at being seen in public

with a well-dressed young woman leaning on his arm, whose blooming appearance frequently caused his ears to be regaled with the whispers of admiration which it elicited. If any one accosted him, doubtful of the relation in which we stood to each other, he would say, "This is my daughter," with an air of modest triumph, which I was not the last to perceive, and which touched me without making me vain, since I ascribed it entirely to parental affection. If I spoke, you might see him watching, in those around, the effect of my voice, or of the good sense I may have uttered, and asking them by his looks if he had not reason to be proud. Meanwhile, this worldly life, these arts, the imagination they awaken, the desire to please, so powerful in females, my devotion, my studies, my reason, and my faith, how are all these to be reconciled? This was precisely the origin of the trouble of which I have just spoken, the progress and effects of which are worthy of an exposition, which however it is not a little difficult to give.

With the bulk of mankind, formed rather to feel than to think, the passions give the first shock to their creed, when that creed has been imbibed from education. It is the passions that raise

the first contradictions between the principles that have been adopted, the desires that cannot easily be quelled, and the institutions of a policy ill calculated to reconcile them; but in a young mind given to reflection, and placed out of reach of the seductions of the world, it is reason that first gives the alarm, and urges us to examine, before we have any interest to doubt. Meanwhile, though my inquietude was unalloyed with selfish considerations, it was not on that account independent of my sensibility: I thought from the heart; and my reason, though remaining impartial, was never indifferent.

The first thing that shocked me in my religion, which I professed with the seriousness of a solid and logical mind, was the sweeping damnation of all those who had not known and believed in it. When, instructed by history, I had well considered the extent of the earth, the succession of ages, the progress of empires, the virtues and errors of so many nations, I found the idea weak, absurd, and impious, of a Creator who should devote to eternal torment those countless beings, the frail work of His hands, cast on the earth in the midst of such perils, and in the night of an ignorance which

has proved the root of a thousand misfortunes. "I am deceived in *this* article of my faith, it is evident; am I not equally wrong in some others? Let me examine." From the moment a Catholic has arrived at this point, the Church may regard him as lost. I perfectly conceive why the priesthood require a blind submission, and preach so ardently that religious credulity which adopts without examination, and adores without murmuring; this is the basis of their empire, which is destroyed as soon as we begin to investigate. Next to the doctrine of exclusive salvation, the absurd idea of infallibility was the most indigestible, and I rejected that like the other. "What then remains that is true?" said I. This became the object of a research continued during a number of years with an activity, and sometimes an anxiety, of mind, which it is difficult to describe. Critical, moral, philosophical, and metaphysical writers became my favorite study. I was solicitous to find some one who should assist me in my choice; and their analysis and comparison occupied almost all my attention. I had lost the monk of Saint Victor, my confessor; the good M. Lallement, to whose honesty and discretion

I rejoice now to testify, was dead. Under the necessity of choosing a successor, my attention was directed to the Abbé Morel, who belonged to our parish, and whom I had seen at my uncle's; he was a little man, not deficient in understanding, and who professed the utmost austerity of principle, which trait was the motive that determined me in my choice. When my faith wavered, he was sure to be the first who was informed of it; for I never could tell anything but the truth; and he was eager to put into my hands the apologists and champions of Christianity. Behold me then closeted with the Abbé Gauchat, the Abbé Bergier, Abbadie, Holland, Clarke, and others. I studied them patiently, and I sometimes made notes, which I left in the book when I returned it to the Abbé Morel, who asked with astonishment if it was I who had written and conceived them. It is pleasant to remark that in these books I became acquainted with the authors they pretended to refute, and learned the titles of their works so as to be able to procure them; thus furnishing myself with the arms of deism from the very arsenal of Christianity. In this way did the treatise on "Toleration," the "Dictionnaire Phi-

losophique," "Questions on the Encyclopedia," the "Bon Sens" of the Marquis d'Argens, the "Jewish Letters," the "Turkish Spy," "Les Mœurs," "L'Esprit," Diderot, d'Alembert, Raynal, and the "Système de la Nature," pass successively through my hands.

The progress of my mind was not the only one I experienced: nature had also its progress of different kinds, and was working in every way to my maturity..

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To the newly acquired sensations of a frame robust and well organized, were insensibly joined all the modifications of a desire to please. I loved to appear well dressed, found delight in hearing it said of me, and occupied myself willingly in what was likely to procure me the gratification.' This, perhaps, is as proper a place as any to introduce my portrait. At fourteen years, as now, my stature was about five feet, for I had completed my growth; my leg and foot were well formed; the hips full and bold; the chest large, and the bust well rounded; my shoulders of an elegant *tournure;* my carriage firm and graceful, my step light and quick. Such was the first *coup d'œil.* As

to my face, there was nothing in it specially striking of itself, save perhaps the fresh color, the tenderness and expression. To go into details, "Where," it may be asked, "is the beauty?" Not a feature is regular, but all please. The mouth is rather large — one sees a thousand that are prettier; but where is there a smile more sweet and engaging? The eye is scarcely large enough, and its iris is of a grayish hue; but, though somewhat prominently set, it is frank, lively, and tender, crowned by delicately pencilled brown eyebrows (the color of my hair), and its expression varies with the changing emotions of the soul whose activity it reflects; grave and haughty, at times it imposes; but it charms oftener, and is always animated. The nose gave me some uneasiness; I thought it too full at the end, but, regarded with the rest, and especially in profile, it did not detract from the general effect of the face. The ample forehead, at that age exposed and unhidden by the hair, with arched eyebrows, and veins in the form of the Greek γ, that dilated at the slightest emotion, dignified an *ensemble* remote enough from the insignificance of so many faces. As for the chin, which was slightly

retiring, it has the precise characteristics attributed by physiognomists to the voluptuary. Indeed, when I combine all the peculiarities of my character, I doubt if ever an individual was more formed for pleasure, or has tasted it so little. The complexion was clear rather than fair; its lively colors were frequently heightened by a sudden effervescence of the blood, occasioned by nerves the most sensitive; the skin soft and smooth; the arms finely rounded; the hand elegant without being small, because the fingers, long and slender, announce dexterity and preserve grace; teeth white and well ranged; and, lastly, the plenitude and plumpness of perfect health: such are the gifts with which nature had endowed me. I have lost many of them, particularly such as depend upon bloom and fulness of figure; but those which remain are sufficient to conceal, without any assistance of art, five or six years of my age, and the persons who see me must be informed of what it is, to believe me more than two or three and thirty. It is only since my beauty has faded that I have known what was its extent; while in its bloom I was unconscious of its worth, and perhaps this ignorance aug-

mented its value. I do not regret its loss, because I have never abused it; but if my duty could accord with my taste to leave less ineffective what remains of it, I certainly should not be mortified. My portrait has frequently been drawn, painted, and engraved, but none of these imitations gives an idea of my person;[1] it is difficult to seize, because I have more soul than figure, more expression than features. This an inferior artist cannot express; it is probable even that he would not perceive it. My face kindles in proportion to the interest with which I am inspired, in the same manner as my mind is developed in proportion to the mind with which I have to act. I find myself so dull with some people, that, perceiving the abundance of my resources with persons of talent, I have imagined, in my simplicity, that to them alone I was indebted for it. I generally please, because I dislike to offend; but it is not granted to all to find me handsome, or to discover what I am worth. I can imagine an old coxcomb, enamored of himself, and vain of displaying his slender stock of science, fifty years in acquiring, who might see me for ten years to-

[1] The cameo of Langlois is the least imperfect.

gether without discovering that I could do more than cast up a bill, or cut out a shirt. Camille Desmoulins was right when he expressed his amazement, that "at my age, and with so little beauty," I had still what he calls adorers. I have never spoken to him, but it is probable that with a personage of his stamp I should be cold and silent, if I were not absolutely repulsive. But he missed the truth in supposing me to hold a court. I hate gallants as much as I despise slaves, and I know perfectly how to baffle your complimenters. I have need, above all things, of esteem and benevolence; admire me afterwards if you will, but I cannot live without being respected and cherished: this seldom fails from those who see me often, and who possess, at the same time, a sound understanding and a heart.

That desire to please, which animates a youthful breast and excites so delicious an emotion at the flattering looks of which we perceive ourselves the object, was oddly combined with my timid reserve and the austerity of my principles; and, displayed in my dress, it lent my person a charm that was strictly peculiar. Nothing could be more decent than my dress,

nothing more modest than my deportment. I wished them to announce propriety and grace; and from the commendations that were bestowed upon me, I flattered myself that I succeeded. Meanwhile, that renunciation of the world, that contempt of its pomps and vanities, so strongly recommended by Christian morality, ill accorded with the suggestions of nature. Their contradictions at first tormented me, but my reasonings necessarily extended to rules of conduct, as to articles of faith. I applied myself with equal attention to the investigation of what I was to do, and the examination of what I ought to believe. The study of philosophy, considered as the science of manners and the basis of happiness, became indeed my only study, and I referred to it all my readings and observation.

In metaphysics and moral systems I experienced the same feeling as in reading poems, when I fancied myself transformed into the personage of the drama that had most analogy to myself, or that I most esteemed. I accordingly adopted the propositions the novelty or brilliance of which had most impressed me, and these I held until others more novel or more profound superseded them. Thus, in the con-

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troversial class, I enrolled myself with the Port-Royal school; their logic and austerity accorded with my character, while I felt an instinctive aversion for the sophistical and pliant doctrine of the Jesuits. While I was examining the sects of the ancient philosophers, I gave the palm to the Stoics. I endeavored, like them, to maintain that pain was no evil. This folly, indeed, could not last, but I nevertheless persisted in determining not to permit myself to be conquered by suffering; and the small experiments I had occasion to make persuaded me that I could endure the greatest torments without uttering a cry. The night of my marriage overturned the confidence I had till then preserved: it must, however, be allowed, that surprise in certain cases is to be counted for something, and that a novice in this philosophy may be expected to hold himself more firm against an ill that is foreseen, than against one that takes him by surprise, and where the exact contrary was looked for.

During two months that I studied Descartes and Malebranche, I had considered my kitten, when she mewed, merely as a piece of mechanism performing its movements; but in thus

habitually separating sensation from its manifestations, I became a mere anatomist, and found no longer anything attractive or interesting in the world. I thought it infinitely more delightful to furnish everything with a soul; and indeed, rather than dispense with it, I should have adopted the system of Spinoza. Helvetius did me considerable injury by annihilating all my most ravishing illusions; everywhere he posited a mean and revolting self-interest. Yet what sagacity! what luminous development! I persuaded myself that Helvetius delineated mankind as they had been disfigured and depraved by an erroneous and vicious form of society, and I judged it useful to be acquainted with his system, as a security against the knaveries of the world; but I was upon my guard against adopting his principles respecting man in the abstract, and applying them to the appreciation of my own actions. I would not so undervalue and degrade myself: I felt myself capable of a generosity, of which he did not admit the possibility. With what delight did I oppose to his system the great exploits of history, and the virtues of the heroes it has celebrated! I never read the recital of a glorious deed but I

said to myself: "It is thus I would have acted." I became a passionate lover of republics, in which I found the most virtues to admire and the most men to esteem. I became convinced that this form of government was the only one capable of producing such virtues and such characters. I felt myself not unequal to the former; I repulsed with disdain the idea of uniting myself to a man inferior to the latter; and I demanded, with a sigh, why I was not born amidst these republics.

About this time we made an excursion to Versailles, my mother, my uncle, Mademoiselle d'Hannache, and myself. This journey had no other object than to show me the court and the place it inhabited, and to amuse me with its pageantry. We lodged in the palace. Madame le Grand, nurse to the Dauphin, well known to my uncle Bimont, through her son, of whom I shall have occasion to speak, being absent, lent us her apartments. They were in the attic story, in the same corridor with those of the Archbishop of Paris, and so close to them that it was necessary for that prelate to speak in a low tone of voice to avoid being overheard by us; the same precaution was requisite on our part. Two

chambers indifferently furnished, over one of which it was contrived to lodge a valet, and the avenue to which was rendered insupportable by its obscurity and its odors, were the habitation which a duke and peer of France did not disdain to occupy, that he might have the honor of cringing every morning before their majesties; and this servile prelate, meanwhile, was no other than the austere Beaumont. For one entire week we were constant spectators of the life of the inmates of the château, sometimes separated, and sometimes united, their masses, promenades, card parties, and the whole round of presentations.

Our acquaintance with Madame le Grand facilitated our admission; while Mademoiselle d'Hannache, penetrated with confidence everywhere, ready to batter down with her name whoever should oppose any resistance, and fancying they must read in her grotesque countenance the ten generations of her genealogy. She recollected two or three *gardes du roi*, whose pedigrees she recounted with minuteness, proving herself precisely the relation of him whose name was the most ancient, and who seemed to possess most consideration at court.

The spruce figure of a little clergyman like Bimont, and the imbecile hauteur of the ugly d'Hannache, were not wholly out of place at Versailles; but the unrouged face of my respectable mother, and the sober decency of my apparel, announced that we were *bourgeois;* and if my youth or my eyes drew forth a word or two, they were modulated with a tone of condescension that gave me no less offence than the compliments of Madame de Boismorel. Philosophy, imagination, sentiment, and calculation were all equally exercised in me upon this occasion. I was not insensible to the effects of sumptuousness and magnificence, but I felt indignant that they should be employed to exalt certain individuals already too powerful from circumstances and totally insignificant in themselves. I preferred seeing the statues in the gardens to the personages of the court; and my mother inquiring if I was pleased with my visit, "Yes," replied I, "if only it be soon over; a few days longer, and I shall so perfectly detest these people that I shall not know what to do with my hatred."

"What harm do they do you?"

"They give me the feeling of injustice, and

oblige me every moment to contemplate absurdity."

I sighed at the recollection of Athens, where I could equally have admired the fine arts, without being annoyed with the spectacle of despotism. In imagination I traversed Greece; I assisted at the Olympic Games, and I murmured that I was born in France. Enchanted with what I beheld in the golden period of the republic, I passed over the disorders by which it had been agitated: I forgot the exile of Aristides, the death of Socrates, the condemnation of Phocion. I dreamt not that heaven had reserved me to be witness of errors similar to those of which *they* were the victims, and to participate in the glory of the same persecution after having professed the same principles. Heaven knows that the misfortunes which affect only myself have not extorted from me a sigh or even a regret; I am sensible only of those which afflict my country. Upon the divisions of the court and the parliament in 1771,[1] my character and opinions attached

[1] The time of Chancellor Maupeou's famous *coup d'état*, the installation of the "*Parlement Maupeou*." Of the wholesale suppressions in 1771 of the *parlements*, De Tocqueville says: "At this date the radical revolution became inevitable."

me to the party of the latter; I procured all their remonstrances, and was most pleased by those of which the principles and style were the most outspoken and daring. The sphere of my ideas continually enlarged. My own happiness, and the duties to the performance of which it was attached, occupied my earliest attention; the desire of instruction afterwards made me devour history and scrutinize my own surroundings; the relation of man to the divinity so variously represented, overcharged, and disfigured, excited my notice; and finally the interests of my fellow creatures and the organization of society fixed and absorbed all my thoughts.

In the midst of doubts, uncertainty, and investigation, relative to these grand objects, I concluded without hesitation, that the unity of the individual, if I may so express myself, the most entire harmony that is to say, between his opinions and actions, was necessary to his personal happiness. Accordingly we must examine well what is right, and when we have found it, practise it rigorously. There is a kind of justice that man has to observe towards himself, should he exist solitary on the earth: he should

govern all his affections and habits, that he may be tyrannized and enslaved by none. A being is good in itself when all its parts concur to its preservation, its maintenance, or its perfection; this is not less true in the moral than in the physical universe. Justness of organization, an even temper, constitute health; wholesome food and moderate exercise preserve it. The proportion of our desires and the harmony of the passions form the moral constitution, of which wisdom alone can secure the excellence and duration. These first principles are grounded in self-interest, and in this regard it may justly be said that virtue is only soundness of judgment applied to morals. But virtue, properly so called, results from the relations of a being with his fellow beings; justice towards ourselves is wisdom; justice towards others is virtue. In society all is relative; there is no happiness independent; we are necessitated to sacrifice a part of what we might enjoy, not to be deprived of the whole, and to secure a portion against all assaults. Even here the balance is in favor of reason. However burdensome may be the life of the honest, that of the vicious must be more so. He can seldom be tranquil

who stands in opposition to the interest of the majority; it is impossible for him to conceal from himself that he is surrounded by enemies, or by those who are ready to become so; and this situation is always painful, however splendid it appear. Let us add to these considerations the sublime rectitude of instinct which corruption may lead astray, but which no false philosophy can ever annihilate; which impels us to admire and love wisdom and generosity of conduct as we do grandeur and beauty in nature and the arts — and we shall have the source of human virtue independent of every religious system, of the intricacies of metaphysics, and of the impostures of priests. When I had combined and demonstrated these truths, my heart expanded with joy; they offered me a port in the tempest, and afforded me a station, whence I could with less anxiety examine the errors of national creeds and the vices of social institutions. The glorious idea of a Divine Creator, whose providence watches over the world; the immateriality of the soul, and lastly its immortality, that consolation of persecuted and suffering virtue — can these be nothing more than amiable and splendid chimeras? Yet what absurdities enwrap these

difficult problems! What accumulated objections involve them, if we wish to examine them with a mathematical rigor! — But no: it is not allotted to man to behold these truths in the full day of perfect evidence; and what does it signify to the sensible soul that he cannot demonstrate them? Is it not sufficient that he feels them?

In the silence of the closet and the dryness of discussion I can agree with the atheist or the materialist as to the hopeless insolubility of certain questions; but in the bosom of the country and in the contemplation of nature my soul soars to the vivifying principle that animates all things, to the all-powerful mind that arranges them, to the goodness that invests them with such exquisite charms. Now, when thick walls separate me from my loved ones, when society heaps upon us evil after evil as a punishment for having sought its welfare, I look beyond the bounds of life for the reward of our sacrifices, and the felicity of reunion.

How? In what manner? I am ignorant; I only feel that it ought to be so.[1]

[1] I write this on the 4th of September, at eleven at night, the apartment next to me resounding with peals of laughter.

The Atheist is not, in my eyes, a man of ill faith: I can live with him as well, nay, better than with the devotee, for he reasons more; but he is deficient in a certain sense, and his soul does not keep pace with mine; he is unmoved at a spectacle the most ravishing, and he hunts for a syllogism, where I am impressed with awe and admiration.

It was not suddenly and at once that I attained this secure and peaceful station, in which, enjoying the truths which are demonstrated to me, and resigning myself with confidence to the feelings that constitute my happiness, I am content to be ignorant of what cannot be known, without being disturbed by the opinions of others. I compress in a few words the essence of many years' meditation and study, in the course of which I have sometimes shared the zeal of the theist, the austerity of the

The actresses of the *Théâtre Français* were arrested yesterday, and conducted to Sainte Pélagie. To-day they were taken to their own apartments to witness the ceremony of taking off the seals, and are now returned to the prison, where the peace-officer is supping and amusing himself with them. The meal is noisy and frolicsome; I catch the sound of coarse jests, while foreign wines sparkle in the goblet. The place, the object, the persons, my occupation, altogether form a contrast which appears to me sufficiently curious.

atheist, and the indifference of the sceptic. These fluctuations were always sincere, as I had no inducement to change my opinions for the purpose of countenancing a relaxation of manners; my system of conduct was fixed beyond the power of prejudice to shake; I sometimes felt the agitation of doubt, but never the torments of fear. I conformed to the established worship, because my age, my sex, my situation, made it my duty to do so; but, incapable of deceit, I said to the Abbé Morel, "I come to confession for the edification of my neighbor, and the peace of my mother; but I scarcely know of what to accuse myself; my situation is so calm, my tastes are so simple, that, though I have no great merit to boast, I have little to reproach myself with. Perhaps I am too much engrossed by a wish to please, and too impatient with those about me, when anything occurs to give me vexation. I am also not sufficiently indulgent in my judgments of others, and, without suffering it to manifest itself, I too hastily conceive aversion to those who appear to me stupid or dull; but in this I will be careful to correct myself. Lastly, in the exercises of religion I give way too much

to coldness and indifference; for I acknowledge that we ought to be attentive to whatever we think it requisite to perform, be the motive what it may." The good Morel, who had exhausted his library and his rhetoric to keep me in the faith, had the good sense to be pleased at finding me so reasonable; he exhorted me, however, to distrust the spirit of pride, represented with all his force the consolations of religion, thought proper to grant me absolution, and even consented that I should attend the holy table three or four times in the year out of philosophical toleration, since I could no longer do it from the dictates of faith. When I received the sacred wafer, I recalled the words of Cicero that, to complete the follies of men with respect to the Deity, it only remained for them to transform Him into food, and then to devour him. My mother increasing daily in piety, I was less able to deviate from the ordinary practices, as there was nothing I so much dreaded as to afflict her.

The Abbé le Grand, friend of my uncle Bimont, sometimes visited us. He was a man of excellent judgment, who had no badge of his profession but his gown, by which too he

was sufficiently embarrassed. His family had made him a priest, because, of three sons, one must of necessity enter the church. Appointed almoner to the Prince of Lamballe, and pensioned after the death of his patron by Penthièvre, he had settled himself in a parish merely that he might have a fixed residence, and had chosen it near his friend to enjoy his society. Affected with great weakness of sight, he had become blind when very young, and this accident fostering his turn for reflection had rendered him extremely contemplative. He liked to chat with me, and often brought me books, which were almost always works of philosophy, on the principles of which he spoke freely. My mother avoided discussion, and I was afraid of pushing things too far; she did not, however, hinder me from reading, nor did she blame my choice of subjects. A Genevese watchmaker, connected in the way of business with my father, a worthy man, who always kept a book among his tools and had a tolerable library, with which he was better acquainted than most of your great lords are with theirs, offered me the use of his treasure, so suited to my taste, and I availed myself of his kindness. This good M.

Moré was capable of reasoning, not only on his art, but on morals and politics; and if he expressed himself with a difficulty that my impatience found hard to support, he shared with most of his countrymen that solidity of intellect which excuses the want of grace. From him I had Buffon, and many other works. I cite this author to repeat what I have said in a former part of my memoirs of the discretion with which I read him. Philosophy, in developing the force of my soul and giving firmness to my mind, had in no way diminished the scruples of sentiment, and the susceptibility of my imagination, against which I had so much reason to guard myself. Natural history at first, and then mathematics, exercised for a time my activity. Nollet, Réaumur, Bonnet (who poetizes where others describe), amused me in turn, as did Maupertuis, who writes elegies while depicting the pleasures of snails. At length Rivard inspired me with the design of becoming a geometrician. Guéring, stonemason and surveyor, who mixed discretion and mildness with the simplicity of the artisan, coming one day to discourse with my father, found me so engrossed with the quarto of

Rivard, that I had not perceived his arrival. He entered into conversation with me, and informed me that Clairaut's Elements would give me much clearer notions upon the subject I was studying; and the next day he brought me a copy of the work which he had in his possession. I found it to contain a summary of the first principles of the science, and considering that the work might be useful to me, and that I could not detain it from the proprietor so long as I might wish, I formed, without hesitation, the resolution to copy it from beginning to end, including six plates of diagrams. I cannot avoid laughing at this operation whenever I remember it; any other than myself would have purchased the book, but the idea never occurred to me, and that of copying came as naturally as that of pricking a pattern for a ruffle, and was almost as soon effected; for the work was but a small octavo. This pleasant performance is still, I believe, among my papers. Geometry delighted me as long as there was no necessity for algebra, with the dryness of which I was disgusted as soon as I had passed the first degree of equations. I accordingly threw to the winds the multiplicity of fractions, and

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found it more profitable to feast upon a good poem than to starve myself with *roots*. In vain, some years after, did M. Roland, paying his addresses, endeavor to revive in me this ancient taste; we made, indeed, a great many figures; but the mode of deduction by X and Y was never sufficiently attractive to fix my attention.

September 5. *I cut the sheet to inclose what I have written in the little box; for when I see a revolutionary army decreed, new tribunals formed for shedding innocent blood, famine threatened, and the tyrants at bay, I augur that they must have new victims, and conclude that no one is secure of living another day.*

The correspondence with Sophie was still one of my chief pleasures, and the bands of our friendship had been drawn closer by several journeys which she had made to Paris. My susceptible heart had need, I will not say of an illusion, but of an object upon which to centre its affections, and especially of confidence and communication. Friendship offered them, and I cherished it with ardor. My relation with my

mother, agreeable as it was, would not have supplied the place of this affection; it had too much of the gravity resulting from respect on the one part, and of authority on the other. My mother might have known everything; I had nothing to conceal from her, but I could not tell her all. To a parent one addresses confessions; one can really confide only in an equal.

My mother, without asking to see the letters I wrote to Sophie, was pleased to have them shown to her; and our arrangement of this matter was not without its humorous side. We understood each other without a word having passed between us on the subject. When I heard from my friend, which I did regularly every week, I read to my mother a few passages from the letter; when I had written my reply I left it for a day, ready folded and directed, on my table, but unsealed; my mother scarcely ever failed to glance over its contents, and when I happened to be present on these occasions I always found an excuse for retiring, whether she had seen my letter or not; after the supposed necessary interval had elapsed, I sealed and dispatched it, but not always without

adding a postscript. It never happened that she made any mention of what she had read; but I did not fail to inform her by this means of what I wished her to know of my disposition, my taste, and my opinions; and I expressed them with a freedom which I should not have dared to use with her in conversation. My frankness was not at all diminished by this circumstance, for I felt that I had a right to exercise it in its full extent, and that there did not exist anywhere a reciprocal right to blame it. I have often thought since, that, had I been in the place of my mother, I should have wished to become the entire confidant of my daughter; and if I have any present regrets, it is that mine may not be as I was at that time. Were it so, we should proceed on a perfect equality, and I should be happy. But my mother, with much goodness of heart, was at the same time somewhat cold. She was prudent rather than tender, and more circumspect than unreserved. Perhaps too she perceived in me an ardor that would have hurried me to greater lengths than herself. Her manner induced me to behave without constraint, but also without familiarity. She was sparing of caresses, though her eyes,

breathing tenderness and love, were continually fixed upon me. I felt upon these occasions her heart; it fathomed mine; but the reserve which surrounded her person gave me a degree of reserve in return which I should not otherwise have had, and which seemed to increase as I advanced towards maturity. My mother had a dignity, touching it is true, but still it was dignity. The transports of my ardent nature were repressed by it, and I never knew all the force of my attachment to her, except by the despair and delirium into which I was plunged by her loss. Our days flowed on in a delicious tranquillity; I spent the greater part in my solitary studies, transported to the days of antiquity, and lost in the study of its history and arts, its precepts and opinions. Mass in the morning, a few hours devoted to common readings, our repasts and our walks were the only opportunities of being with my mother. Our walks were rare, and when we had visitors that were not to my taste, I took care to avoid them by remaining in my closet, which my mother had not the cruelty to oblige me to quit. Sundays and festivals were consecrated to what may be called our rambles, which frequently

extended to a distance, owing to my preference for the country to the artificial gardens of the capital. I was, however, by no means insensible to the pleasure of appearing occasionally in the public walks; they afforded at that period a brilliant spectacle, in which the youth of both sexes sustained an agreeable part. Personal graces constantly obtained there the homage of admiration, which modesty cannot but perceive, and of which the heart of a young girl is always avaricious. But it did not satisfy mine; I experienced after these walks — during which my vanity, powerfully roused, was upon the anxious watch for whatever could show me to advantage and give me the proof that I had made a good use of my time — an insupportable vacuity, an uneasiness and disgust, which were too dear a price for so frivolous an enjoyment. Used to reflect upon and account for my sensations, I sought the cause of this dissatisfaction, and I found full exercise for my philosophy.

"Is it, then," I reflected, "to glitter to the eye, like the flowers of a parterre, and to receive a few evanescent praises, that persons of my sex are formed to virtue and enriched with talents? What means this intense desire

of pleasure with which I feel myself devoured, and which is still insufficient to render me happy, even when it should seem to be most gratified? What good do I derive from the prying looks, the flattering whispers, of a crowd, of which I have no knowledge, and composed of persons whom, did I know them, I should probably despise? Am I then placed in the world to waste my existence in vain cares and tumultuous sensations? Doubtless I have a better and nobler destination! The admiration, which I so ardently feel for whatever is virtuous, wise, exalted, and generous, tells me that I am called to practise these things. The sublime and interesting duties of a wife and a mother may some day be mine; the days of my youth therefore should be employed in rendering me equal to the discharge of them; I ought to study their importance; I ought to learn, by regulating my own inclinations, how to direct hereafter those of my children; by the habit of self-restraint, by the cultivation of my mind, I ought to secure to myself the means of effecting the happiness of the most delightful of societies, of providing a never-failing source of felicity for the man who shall merit my esteem and

love, and of communicating to all that surround us a charm and lustre that shall be the entire work of my own hands."

Such were the thoughts that agitated my breast. Overcome with emotion, my heart shed its transports in tears; and ascending to that supreme Intelligence, that First Cause, that glorious Providence, that principle of thought and of sentiment, which it felt the necessity of believing and acknowledging, "O Thou," it exclaimed, "who hast placed me on the earth, enable me to fill my destination in the manner most conformable to Thy divine will, and most beneficial to the welfare of my brethren of mankind!"

This concise prayer, simple as the heart that dictated it, has become my only one; never have the doubts of philosophy, or any species of dissipation, been able to dry up its source. From the tumult of the world and from the depth of a prison, it has ascended with the same energy. I have pronounced it with transport in the most splendid conjunctures of my life; I repeat it in fetters with resignation; anxious in the former to guard myself from everything that was unworthy of the dignity

of my station, careful in the latter to preserve the necessary fortitude for supporting me in the trials to which I am exposed; persuaded that, in the course of things, there are events against which human prudence cannot guard; that the heaviest afflictions cannot crush the virtuous, the firm-fixed soul; and that peace with one's self, resignation to one's lot, are the elements of felicity, and form the true independence of the sage and the hero.

The country presented objects more congenial to my habits of meditation, to that serious, tender, and pensive disposition, fortified by reflection and the developments of a sensible heart. We often went to Meudon, which was my favorite walk. I preferred its wild woods, its solitary ponds, its pine vistas, and its lofty groves, to the frequented paths and uniform coppices of the Bois de Boulogne, to the decorations of Bellevue, or the clipped alleys of St. Cloud.

"Where shall we go to-morrow, if the weather be fine?" said my father on the Saturday evenings in summer, looking smilingly at me; "shall we go to St. Cloud? The fountains are to play: there will be a world of company."

"Ah, papa! I should like it far better if you would go to Meudon."

By five the next morning everybody was up; a light dress, clean and simple, some flowers, and a gauze veil, announced the plan of the day. The Odes of Rousseau, a volume of Corneille, or some other author, constituted my baggage. We embarked at the Port-Royal, which I could see from my window, in a little boat that smoothly and swiftly conveyed us to the shores of Bellevue, not far from the glassworks, the thick black smoke of which was visible at some distance. Thence by steep paths we gained the avenue of Meudon, a little beyond the midway of which was a little cottage on the right, which became one of our resting-places. It was the house of a widow, a milkwoman, who lived there with her two cows and her poultry. As it was important to spend the best hours of the day in our ramble, we agreed to stop at the cottage on our return, to drink a cup of fresh milk with our hostess. This arrangement came to form a regular part of the day's programme, and thenceforth we seldom entered the avenue without stopping to tell our friend that she might expect to see us in the evening or the

next day, and that she must not forget our bowl of milk.

The good woman received us with much kindness; and our repast, seasoned with a cheerful temper, had always the air of a little feast, of which some remembrance survived each time in the pocket of the milkwoman. Our dinner we took at the lodge of one of the Swiss of the park; but my turn for exploration soon led to the discovery of a retreat better suited to my taste. One day, after having strolled a long time in an unfrequented part of the wood, we reached a solitary spot at the end of an alley of lofty trees, the silence of which was rarely disturbed by promenaders. A few trees scattered on the smooth sward almost concealed a pretty, two-storied cottage. "Ah! what is here?" exclaimed one of us.

Two fine children were playing before the door, which was open. They had neither the town-bred air, nor those marks of poverty and distress that belong to the country. We approached: we saw upon the left a kitchen garden, with an old man at work in it. We entered, and opened a conversation. The name of the place was Ville Bonne; its occu-

pant was the water-bailiff of the Moulin-Rouge, whose office it was to see that the artificial canals of the park were kept in repair. His small salary contributed in part to support a little family, of which the two children were members, and the old man their grandfather. It was the occupation of the mother to take care of the house, of the old man to cultivate the garden, and of the son to carry its produce to market, whenever his avocations would allow him. The garden was a long square, divided into four parts; a walk sufficiently wide led round them; in the centre was a pond for irrigation; at the farther end was an arbor of yews inclosing a stone bench, inviting at once for rest and shade. Flowers interspersed among the kitchen plants gave the garden an air of gayety and beauty. The old man, sturdy and contented, reminded me of the peasant of the banks of the Galesus, whom Virgil has sung. He talked with an obliging air, and in a sensible tone. A taste for simplicity would alone have made such an encounter agreeable; but my fancy did not fail to surround it with a thousand imaginary charms. We asked whether they were in the habit of receiving guests.

"Strangers seldom come to this place," said the old man; "scarcely anybody finds it; but when they do, we willingly serve to them the produce of our farm-yard and our garden." We expressed a desire to dine with him, and we had a repast of new-laid eggs, pulse, and a salad, in a pretty arbor of honeysuckle behind the house. I never ate so delicious a meal. My heart expanded in contemplating the tranquillity and innocence of so charming a situation. I caressed the children; I accosted the old man with reverence. The mother seemed pleased with the task of serving us. They told us of two rooms in their house which they could let for three months to anybody that was disposed to hire them. We formed the project of becoming their tenants. This plan was never carried out; nor have I seen Ville Bonne from that time.[1]

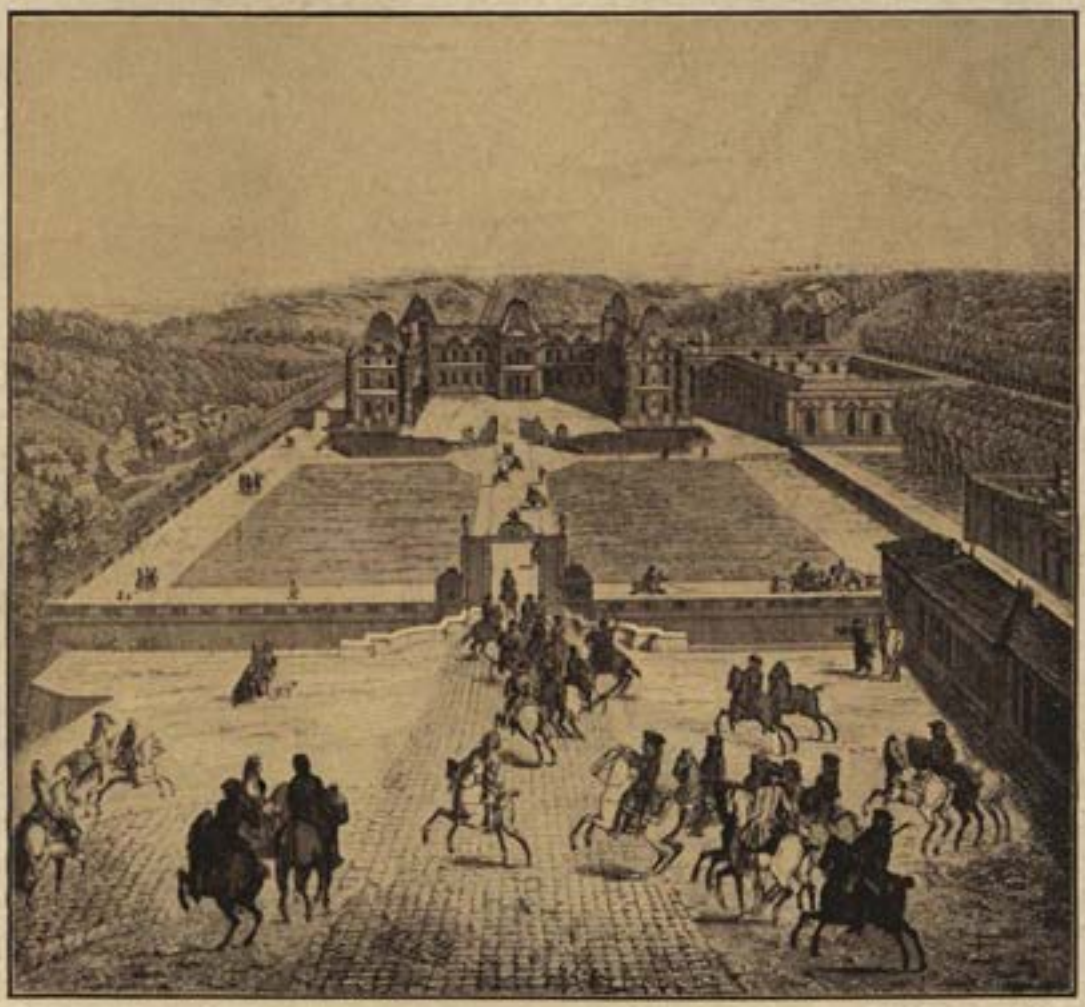
Meudon had been our usual resort before we made this discovery, and we had fixed upon a little inn in the village for our lodging, whenever two holidays coming together permitted us to prolong our absence. At this inn, the sign of

[1] There is a lapse of memory here, for Madame Roland speaks later on of a second visit to Ville Bonne.

which I think was the Queen of France, we met with a humorous adventure. We occupied a two-bedded room; in the largest of the beds I slept with my mother; the other, which was in a corner, served my father. One evening, as soon as he was in bed, the fancy took him of drawing his curtains perfectly close, and he pulled them with so good a will as to bring the tester and all its apparatus upon him at once. After a moment of alarm, we began to laugh very heartily at the accident: the tester had fallen in a true perpendicular, so as to form a perfect cage for my father without hurting him. We called for assistance to set him at liberty; the good woman of the house arrived; she was astonished to see her bed stripped of the honors of its capital, and exclaimed, with the utmost simplicity, "My God, how could this happen? It is seventeen years since the bed was put up in that very spot; and in all that time it has never budged an inch." The logic of the hostess made me laugh more than the crash of the bed. I recollected it however afterwards, and thought I could often see sufficient reason to compare the arguments I heard in the world with the logic of the landlady of

Meudon. Upon such occasions I would whisper to my mother, and say, "Now that is as good as the argument of the seventeen years to prove the immovability of the bed."

Delightful Meudon! how oft have I breathed peace and joy beneath thy shades, blessing the great Author of my existence, and desiring what might at some future time complete it, but with that charming tranquillity, that desire without impatience, which does but color the clouds of futurity with the rays of hope. How many times have I gathered in thy cool retreat branches of the spotted fern, and flowers of the gay woodbine! How was I enchanted to repose under the lofty trees near the smooth lawns, where I saw passing sometimes the swift and timorous fawn! I recall those still deeper coverts, where we retired from the heat of the day. There, while my father, stretched on the turf, and my mother, peacefully reclined on a heap of leaves which I had collected for the purpose, enjoyed their noontide nap, did I contemplate the majesty of thy silent groves, admire the beauty of nature, and adore the Providence whose benefits I felt. The glow of sentiment warmed my humid cheeks, and the charms of



CHÂTEAU DE MEUDON

ABOUT 1710

the terrestrial paradise existed for my heart in thy wild and rural recesses!

The recitals of my rambles, and the delight they afforded me, had their place in my letters to Sophie; sometimes my prose was interspersed with verse, the artless but facile and sometimes happy effusions of a soul to which all was life, joy, and pageant. Sophie, as I have observed, found herself cast into a world where she had none of the pleasures which she knew me to enjoy. I was acquainted with some persons of her family, and I learned from their society to appreciate more highly my dear retirement and solitude. In one of her journeys with her mother, she stopped at Paris with some cousins, who were called the demoiselles de Lamotte. They were two maiden ladies, of whom one, a sour devotee, never stirred from her chamber, where she said her prayers, scolded the domestics, knitted stockings, and reasoned with tolerable acuteness about her personal interests; the other a good sort of woman, kept to the parlor, did the honors of the house, read the psalms, and enjoyed her game at quadrille. Both set great store upon the nobility of their blood, and could scarcely conceive the possi-

bility of composing their society of persons whose father at least had not been ennobled; and, without daring to use it, kept under safe custody the *sac* with which their mother used to appear at church, as an evidence of their high descent. They had taken under their protection a young woman, their relation, whose slender fortune they proposed to augment, provided she could find a gentleman to espouse her. Mademoiselle d'Hangard was a tall brunette, of a ruddy complexion, and health so vigorous as almost to disgust; whose provincial manners were little calculated to conceal her defects of temper and commonness of mind. But the oddest specimen in this household was the counsellor Perdu, a widower who had wasted his fortune in idleness; and whom his sister (the mother of my Sophie) had installed with his cousins as a lodger in order that he might pass in decency the remaining years of his useless existence. M. Perdu, plump and well-kept, devoted the bulk of the morning to the care of his precious person. At table he ate slowly, abusing the dishes the while, and he passed several hours of the day (which he deigned to close with a game of piquet) in declaiming

at Luxembourg. He attached even more importance to his gentility than did his cousins, and piqued himself upon practising all the airs, and laying down all the principles of it. When I spoke of this uncle of hers to Sophie, I could never call him by any other appellation than the "Commandeur," so strongly did he resemble the character under that title drawn by Crébillon in his "Père de Famille." Accordingly, with his nieces the "Commandeur" had always an air of superiority, which he pretended to temper with the condescensions of politeness; but there was something whimsically absurd in his behavior to Mademoiselle d'Hangard, whose ruddy complexion and continual presence, inflaming his imagination, inspired him with sensations he dared not betray, and occasioned ill-humor of which his nephew was in general the sufferer.

This nephew, whom they called Sélincour, was a well grown youth, with a pleasing voice and an interesting face, and resembled a little his sister Sophie. He was a vivacious talker, and his engaging manners were not disfigured by a certain timidity — at least such was my opinion, towards whom this trait was principally mani-

fested. The wishes of his family appeared to point him out as the suitor of Mademoiselle d'Hangard.

As to the society of the demoiselles de Lamotte, it was composed of a Count d'Essales, created a Chevalier of St. Louis at Canada, where he had married the daughter of the governor; ignorant, vain, garrulous, and a braggart, but taking care to keep well away from the scent of powder, he had just formed an acquaintance with a Marchioness de Caillavelle, a dowager with whom he had more than one game to play, which the old ladies did not detect. Madame Bernier, a rigid Jansenist, but otherwise a sensible woman, whose husband had quitted the Parliament of Brittany at the time of the affair of la Chalotais, also made her appearance sometimes, but more rarely, with her two daughters, the one a blue-stocking, the other a devotee. The tender heart of the latter would have attracted me; but her bent neck bore with difficulty a head so crammed with religion, that there was no room there for reasoning. The *savante*, with rather too much loquacity, had judgment and taste enough just to render a repulsive figure supportable. But

M. de Vouglans soared above them all. A delineation of his character would be superfluous to those who have read the book entitled, "Reasons for my Faith in Jesus Christ, by a Magistrate," and the "Collection of Penal Laws," an elaborate compilation, in which fanaticism and atrocity emulate each other. I never met with a man whose sanguinary intolerance so terribly shocked me. He was delighted with the conversation of Father Romain Joly, a little old Capuchin confessor of the demoiselles de Lamotte, who made verses against Voltaire, in which he compared him to the devil, and cited continually in the pulpit the laws of Charlemagne, and the edicts of our monarchs. I have had the advantage of dining with him at the table of the Lamottes, of hearing him at my parish church, and of reading his "Phaéton." He would have afforded me a capital subject for caricature, had I then had the courage to strip away his frock, and expose his hypocrisy and folly and his puerile attainments. The friend of Sophie cut an amusing figure in that society, where it was regretted, in her absence, that "a young person so well brought up lacked the advantage of birth." I

do not doubt that the "Commandeur," with his usual sagacity, had more than once gravely considered whether such a connection was quite suitable for his niece. But the "young person" was at least well behaved, a quality on which his cousins laid great stress; and, except as to some phrases "*qui sentaient l'esprit*," and which the "Commandeur" did not fail to animadvert upon to his niece, even he could not refrain from bestowing his encomiums. Nay, he would sometimes take charge of the letters of Sophie, and condescend to bring them himself to my mother's: a circumstance that would have happened much more frequently to Sélincour, if his sister would have consented to his executing the commission.

The insignificance and disgusting oddities of these personages — and without doubt, thought I, there must be multitudes in the world of a similar complexion — made me reflect on the inanity of society and the advantage of not being constrained to frequent it. Sophie gave me a list of the persons with whom she associated at Amiens, with a sketch, as nearly as she could delineate it, of their characters, which enabled me to judge of the resources and qualifications

of the majority of them; and when the balance was struck, it appeared that, at the end of the year, I had seen in my solitude more people of merit than she had been able to perceive in all the concourse and dazzle of fashion. This is not difficult to conceive, if it be remembered that the business of my father connected him with a variety of artists, of whom, though none visited him regularly, many were found occasionally at his house. Those who inhabit the capital, even if they are not of the first rank, acquire a fund of information and a kind of urbanity that assuredly are not to be found in the provincial gentry, or in the class of merchants eager to make a fortune that they may purchase a title. The conversation of the good Jollain, a painter of the Academy; of the honest Lépine, pupil of Pigale; of Desmarteau, who sometimes worked with my father on the same plate; of the son of Falconet, of d'Hauterne, whose talents would have borne him on rapid wings to the Academy, had not his Protestantism been in the way; of the Genevese watchmakers, Ballexserd and Moré, the former of whom has written on the physical branch of education, — was certainly infinitely preferable

to that of Cannet with all his hoard of wealth, who seeing the success of a tragedy composed by his kinsman Belloy, and calculating the profits of it, said seriously, and with some irritation: "Why did not my father teach me to write tragedies? I could have composed them on Sundays and holidays." And yet these wealthy blockheads, these despicable nobles, these impertinent *militaires* like d'Essales, these miserable magistrates like Vouglans, conceived themselves the props of civil society, and actually enjoyed privileges denied to merit! I compared these absurdities of human arrogance with the pictures of Pope, tracing its effects from the cobbler to the king, the one vain of his apron, the other of his crown; and I endeavored to conclude with him that "whatever is, is right;" but my free and independent temper could not but perceive that it was much better in a republic.

There is no doubt that our situation in life influences considerably our characters and opinions; but, in the education I received, in the ideas I acquired, whether by study or by observation of the world, everything may be said to have conspired to instil into my mind a repub-

lican enthusiasm, by causing me to perceive the folly, or feel the injustice of a multitude of social pre-eminences and distinctions. Thus, in all my readings, I was impassioned for the reformers of inequality; I was Agis and Cleomenes at Sparta, the Gracchi at Rome; and, like Cornelia, I should have reproached my sons for permitting me to be called only the mother-in-law of Scipio; I retired with the plebeians to the Aventine, and I voted for the tribunes. Now that experience has taught me to appreciate everything with impartiality; I see in the enterprise of the Gracchi and in the conduct of the tribunes crimes and mischiefs which did not then sufficiently strike me.

When I happened to be present at any of the spectacles so frequent in the capital, as the entrances of the queen or princes, thanksgiving after a lying-in, etc., I compared with grief this insolent pomp of Asiatic luxury with the abject misery of the deluded people, who prostrated themselves before these idols of their own making, and foolishly applauded the ostentatious magnificence which they paid for themselves with the necessaries of life. The dissolute character of the court during the last years of

Louis XV., that contempt of morals which reigned in all ranks of the nation, those excesses which were the commonplaces of conversation, struck me with astonishment and indignation. Not then observing the germs of a revolution, I asked with surprise how things could endure in this state? I had remarked in history the invariable decline and subversion of empires when arrived at this pitch of corruption; yet I heard the French nation singing and laughing at its own miseries, and I felt that our neighbors, the English, were right in regarding us as children. I attached myself to these neighbors; the work of Delolme had familiarized me with their constitution; I sought acquaintance with their writers, and studied their literature, but as yet only through the medium of translations.

The arguments of Ballexserd having been insufficient to vanquish the repugnance of my parents to inoculate me in my infancy, I was at eighteen seized with the small-pox. This epoch has left deep impressions on my memory; not from the terrors I felt on account of the malady, for I had already too much philosophy not to sustain it with courage; but from the incredible

and affecting solicitude of my mother. How agitated by disquietude! What tenderness in all her attentions! Even during the night, when I asked for anything, expecting to receive it from my nurse, I felt the hand and heard the voice of my mother. She was every moment out of her bed to attend at my pillow; her anxious eyes devoured the looks, and, if I may so express myself, the words of my physician; in spite of her resolution to suppress them, the tears stole from her eyes when she looked at me, while I endeavored in vain to soothe her agitation with a smile. Neither she nor my father had ever had the disease, yet neither of them would suffer a day to pass without pressing with their lips my disfigured face, which I strove in vain to conceal from them, fearful lest its touch should be fatal. My Agathe, deploring that she was confined to her cloister, sent to me one of her relations, the amiable mother of four children, whom she had inspired with a portion of her attachment for me, and who obstinately persisted in seeing and embracing me without consideration for herself. It was necessary to conceal from my Sophie, then at Paris, the condition of her friend; and I was supposed to

have suddenly set off for the country, that the critical period might elapse without our meeting; but Sélincour called every day to learn the progress of my disorder, and I heard from my chamber his dolorous exclamation when he was told that the complication of a putrid fever was apprehended. I had fortunately the miliary fever; and the eruption which is peculiar to it checking the other, the disorder was accompanied only with those large pustules, thinly scattered, which subside without suppuration, and leave only a dry skin that falls off of itself. It is the species of small-pox, said Dr. Missa, which the Italians denominate *ravaglioni*, pustules of false suppuration, and which leave no vestiges behind; and in fact not even the polish of my skin was injured by it; but long illness threw me into a languor and debility from which it was four or five months before I completely recovered. Pensive in health, and too tender to be gay, but patient in sickness, my sole object was to divert my attention from my own sufferings, and to render less irksome the cares which my condition imposed upon those about me. I gave fancy the reins, prattled all sorts of nonsense, and, so far from requiring to be

diverted myself, it was I who caused the others to laugh.

My physician, Dr. Missa, was a man of good sense, and pleased me exceedingly. As he was somewhat advanced in years, I could dispense with the constraint which I was accustomed to show toward those of his sex; we chatted freely during his visits, which he willingly prolonged, and we became fast friends. "One or other of us," said he one day, "has been much to blame. Either I have come into the world too soon, or you too late." Though Missa interested me by his talents, his age had prevented me from perceiving that I had any reason to lament being born later than himself; and I replied only by a smile. He had taken some nieces under his care with whom he wished me to be acquainted, and we exchanged visits several times; but, as they went out as seldom without their governess as I did without my mother, and as their uncle, from the nature of his profession, could not attend to it, the connection, on account of the distance and our mutual sedentary habits, was dropped. One day Missa scolded because he found on my bed Malebranche's "La Recherche de la Vérité." "Good!" said I, "but if all

your patients would amuse themselves in the same way, instead of railing against their maladies and their doctor, you would have much less business." Some company who were then in my room were discoursing of a new loan, for which the edict had just appeared, and to which all Paris eagerly crowded.

"The French," said Missa, "take all upon trust."

"Say, rather," I observed, "upon appearances."

"True," returned he; "the expression is just and profound."

"Don't scold me then for reading Malebranche," interrupted I, with vivacity, "you see I do not throw away my time upon him."

Missa was at that time assisted in his visits by a young physician, who had recently taken his degree, and whom he sometimes despatched in advance to wait his arrival. This person, to use Missa's expression, would not have had the fault of having come too soon into the world; but then to a tolerable person he added a consequential air that displeased me. I had naturally so strong an aversion to every sort of affectation and self-sufficiency that I considered both to be the proof of a limited under-

standing, if not of absolute weakness; though it is true that, under the old *régime*, they were sometimes only an eccentricity of youth. In short, so far from deceiving me, they create at once an unfavorable impression, and I always form a low opinion of people who display them. This is all I remember of the young doctor, whom I have never seen since, and whom I shall probably never see again.

The country being judged necessary to my perfect recovery, we went to breathe its salutary air at the house of M. and Madame Besnard, with whom two years previously my mother and I had spent almost the whole of September. Their situation was admirably calculated to nourish my philosophy and to fix my meditations on the vices of the social organization.

Madame Besnard, upon the reverse of fortune common to her and her sisters, had entered into the family of a *fermier-général*, whose house she superintended; it was that of the old Haudry. She had there espoused an Intendant, M. Besnard, with whom, having retired for some time from their occupations, she lived comfortably in peace and happiness.

The ill-placed pride of Madame Phlipon had

led her sometimes to express in my presence and in the privacy of the family how much this marriage had displeased her; but, as far as I can judge, she was certainly offended unjustly. M. Besnard was possessed of integrity and honor, qualities that should have recommended him the more, as they were rare in his station of life; and the most delicate behavior has ever marked his conduct to his wife. It is impossible to carry veneration, tenderness, and attachment to a higher pitch. In the sweets of a perfect union, they still prolong a career in which, like another Baucis and Philemon, they win the respect of all who witness their simplicity of life and their virtues. I esteem it an honor to be related to them; and should do so equally, if, with the same character and conduct, M. Besnard had been a footman.

The old Haudry, creator of the vast fortune of the family, was deceased, and had left a large estate to his son, who, born and educated in opulence, was fashioned to dissipate it. This son, who had already lost a charming wife, lived extravagantly, and, according to the custom of the rich, spent a part of the year at his château of Soucy, whither he transplanted the manners

and mode of life of the town, instead of adopting those of the country. He had several neighboring estates, of which that nearest to Soucy (Fontenay), had an old mansion belonging to it that he loved to have occupied; and he had prevailed on M. and Madame Besnard to accept apartments there, in which they passed a part of the summer. This at once contributed to keep up the place, and to give that air of magnificence to his establishments, of which he was ambitious. M. and Madame Besnard were well accommodated, and enjoyed the use of the park, the wildness of which made an agreeable contrast with that of Soucy, and delighted me more than the artificial luxury, which distinguished the abode of the *fermier-général.* Soon after our arrival, Madame Besnard requested us to make a visit with her to Soucy, where the sister-in-law and stepmother of Haudry resided with him and did the honors of his house. This visit was modestly paid before dinner; and I entered, without the least feeling of pleasure, into the *salon*, where Madame Pénault and her daughter received us, with great politeness, it is true, but a politeness that savored a little of superiority. The propriety

of my mother's behavior, and something too that appeared in me, in spite of that air of timidity which is produced by a feeling of our value and a doubt whether it will be appreciated by others, scarcely allowed them to exercise it. I received some compliments, which gave me little pleasure, and to which I replied with a concealed air of irony; when certain parasites, *Croix de St. Louis*, always haunting the mansions of opulence, as shadows flit on the banks of the Acheron, came in to restore to them their self-complacence.

The ladies did not fail, a few days after, to return our visit. Three or four persons accompanied them, who happened to be at the château, their paying their respects to us serving merely for the termination of their walk. Upon this occasion I was more agreeable, and succeeded in infusing into my part of the reception the proportion of modest and decent politeness which re-established the equilibrium. Madame Pénault invited us to dinner; but I was never more astonished than on learning that it was not to her own table, but to that of the servants. I was sensible, however, that, as M. Besnard had formerly been in that station, I ought not, out

of respect to him, to appear averse to accompanying them; but I felt that Madame Pénault ought to have arranged things otherwise, or spared us this contemptuous civility. My aunt saw it in the same light; but, to avoid any little scene, we accepted the invitation. These inferior household deities were a new spectacle to me, for I had formed no conception of ladies'-maids personating grandeur. They were prepared to receive us; and, indeed, aped their superiors admirably well. Toilet, gesture, affectation, graces, nothing was forgotten. The cast-off dresses of their mistresses gave to the female part of the household a richness of appearance that honest tradespeople would think out of character to themselves. The caricature of *bon ton* added to their garb a sort of elegance, not less foreign to *bourgeois* simplicity than odious in the eye of an artist. In spite of all this, however, the fluency of their prate and the multiplicity of their grimaces would no doubt have inspired awe into rustics. It was still worse with the men. The sword of "M. *le maître*," the attentions of "M. *le chef*," the graces and fine clothes of the valets, could not cloak their *gaucheries* or the jargon they affected when they

wished to seem distinguished, or their native vulgarity of speech when for a moment they forgot their assumed gentility. The conversation glittered with marquises, counts, financiers, whose titles, fortunes, and alliances shed a second-hand splendor on those who so glibly discoursed of them. The superfluities of the first table were transferred to the second with an order and despatch that made them appear as if then served for the first time, and with a profusion that sufficed to deck a third table, that of the servants — for it seems the domestics of the first grade called themselves "*officiers*." After dinner, cards were introduced: the stake was high; it was that for which these "*demoiselles*" were accustomed to play, and they played every day. I was introduced to a new world, in which were reflected the prejudices, the vices, and the follies of the great world, the value of which is not really superior, though the show be somewhat more dazzling. I had heard a thousand times of the beginnings of old Haudry, of his coming to Paris from his village, and rising by degrees to the accumulation of thousands at the expense of the public; of his marrying his daughter to Montule, his granddaughters to the

Marquis du Chillau and Count Turpin, and leaving his son heir to immense treasures. I agreed with Montesquieu that financiers support the state, just as the cord supports the criminal. I judged that publicans who found means to enrich themselves to this degree, and to use their wealth as an engine by which to unite themselves with families of rank, which the policy of courts regards as essential to the glory and safety of a kingdom — I judged that characters like these could belong only to a detestable government and a depraved nation. I little thought that there was a government still more horrible, and a corruption more deplorable and odious. And who, indeed, would have imagined it? All the philosophers of the age have been deceived like myself. The system I refer to is that of the present moment.

On Sunday at Soucy a dance was held in the open air, with no other shelter than the trees. Gayety, upon this occasion, suspended distinctions; and when the trial fairly came who should appear to the most advantage, I did not fear to be able to maintain the rank that belonged to me. The new-comers asked in a whisper who I was, but I did not fatigue their sight with my

presence, and, after an hour of this sort of relaxation, I withdrew with my relations to a select and sober walk, one moment of which I would not have sacrificed to the noisy splendor, always cold and uninteresting to my heart, that was to enable me to show off my personal charms. During my stay at Fontenay I frequently saw Haudry, who was still young, assuming the man of rank, giving the rein to his caprices, and wishing to appear generous and noble. His family began already to be uneasy, and his extravagances with the courtesan La Guerre hastened his ruin. He was pitied as imprudent, rather than blamed as vicious; he was the spoiled child of fortune, who had he been born in moderate circumstances would have proved perhaps of some value. Of a dark complexion, a high forehead, the manners of a patron, and an air of courtesy, he was perhaps amiable among those whom he esteemed as his equals; but it was painful to me to meet him, and his presence always inspired me with a gravity that bordered upon disdain.

Last year, coming out of the superb dining-room which the profuse Calonne caused to be constructed in the house of the comptroller-

general, since occupied by the Minister of the Interior, I met in the second antechamber a tall, gray-haired man of respectable appearance, who accosted me respectfully: "I wished, Madame, to speak with the Minister[1] when he had risen from table; I have some business with him."

"Sir, you will see him in an instant: he has been detained in the next apartment, from which he is now coming out."

I bowed, and proceeded to my own apartment. Some time after Roland came to me. I asked if he had seen a person whom I described to him, and who appeared apprehensive of not meeting him.

"Yes, it was M. Haudry."

"What, the quondam *fermier-général*, who squandered such an immense estate?"

"The same."

"And what had he to do with the Minister of the Interior?"

"He had some business with me on account of the manufactory at Sèvres, at the head of which he has been placed." What a reverse of fortune! a new theme of meditation, — for I had already found one when I entered for the

[1] Roland.

first time these apartments, occupied by Madame Necker in the days of her glory. I occupied them then for the second time, and they do but attest the more fully the instability of human affairs; but, at least the revolutions of fortune shall not find me unprepared. Such were my reflections in October, 1792, when Danton sought by magnifying me to belittle my husband, and was silently preparing the calumnies by which he meant to assail us both.[1] I was ignorant of his proceedings, but I had observed the course of things in revolutions. I was ambitious only to preserve my soul pure, and to see the glory of my husband equally unsullied. I well knew that this kind of ambition rarely leads to other species of success. My wish is accomplished: Roland, persecuted and proscribed, will not wholly die to posterity. I am a captive, and shall probably fall a victim; but my conscience requites me for all. It has happened to me as it did to Solomon, who demanded only wisdom, and was endowed with other blessings: I wished

[1] After Roland's resignation as Minister of the Interior, when the question came up in the Convention of asking him to remain in office, Danton sarcastically suggested: "If you invite him, invite Madame Roland too; everybody knows that he has not been alone in his department."

but for the peace of the righteous, and I also shall have some existence in future generations. But let us return to Fontenay.

The little library of my relations afforded me some resources. I found there the works of Puffendorf, tedious perhaps in his universal history, but interesting to me in his "Duties of the Man and the Citizen;" the "Maison Rustique," and other works of agriculture and economy, that I studied for want of better, because it was necessary that I should be always learning something; the pleasant and delicate rhymes that Berni wrote when he was not restrained by the Romish purple; a Life of Cromwell, and a medley of other productions.

I must here remind the reader of the fact that in mentioning casually the long list of books that chance or circumstances had caused to pass through my hands, I have as yet said nothing of Rousseau. The fact is I read him very late — and it was as well for me that I did so, since I might have been so completely engrossed with him as to have read no other author. Even as it is, he has but too much strengthened what I may venture to term my cardinal failing.

I have reason to believe that my mother had been solicitous to keep him out of my way; for, as his name was not unknown to me, I had sought after his works, but, previously to her death, had read only his "Letters from the Mountain," and his "Letter to Christopher de Beaumont;" whereas I had then read the whole of Voltaire and Boulanger and the Marquis d'Argens and Helvetius, besides many other philosophers and critics. Probably my worthy mother, who perceived the necessity of permitting me to exercise my head, was not averse to my studying philosophy even at the risk of a little incredulity; but she doubtless felt that my tender heart, already too impressible, needed no master in the school of sensibility. What a multitude of useless cares to avoid one's destiny! The same idea influenced her, when she interfered to prevent me from devoting myself to painting; and had made her also oppose my studying the harpsichord, though I had a most excellent opportunity for doing so. We had become acquainted in the neighborhood with an Abbé Jeauket, a musical amateur, good-natured, but frightfully ugly, and fond of the pleasures of the table. He was born in the

ROUSSEAU

environs of Prague, had passed many years at Vienna, and had given some lessons there to Marie Antoinette. Led by circumstances to Lisbon, he had at last settled at Paris, where he lived in independence on the pensions that composed his little fortune. He was extremely desirous that my mother would permit him to teach me the harpsichord. He contended that with such fingers and such a head I must have made a great performer, and that I ought not to fail to apply myself to composition. "What a shame," he cried, "to be jingling a guitar, when one might be composing and executing the finest pieces on the greatest of instruments!" But with all his enthusiasm and his repeated entreaties he could not overcome my mother's opposition. For myself, always ready to profit by an opportunity of instruction, but accustomed nevertheless to bow to her decisions, I did not press the matter. Besides, study, in general, afforded me so vast a field of occupation, that I never knew the lassitude of idleness. I often said to myself: When I shall be a mother in my turn it will then be my business to make use of what I shall have acquired; I shall then have no leisure for further studies;

and I was the more earnest to employ my time, fearful of losing a single moment. The Abbé Jeauket was now and then visited by persons of some note, and whenever he invited them to his house, he was anxious to include us in his party. Thus, among others not worth remembering, I became acquainted with the learned Roussier, and the polite d'Odiment; but I have not forgotten the impertinent Paradelle and Madame de Puisieux. This Paradelle was a great scamp in the gown of an abbé, and the greatest coxcomb and braggart I have ever met with. He pretended to have ridden in his carriage at Lyons for twenty years; and yet, that he might not starve at Paris, he was obliged to give lectures on the Italian language, of which he was wholly ignorant. Madame de Puisieux, posing as the author of the work entitled "Caractères," to which her name is prefixed, retained at the age of sixty, with a hunch back and a toothless mouth, the air and pretensions of which the affectation is scarcely pardonable even in youth. I had conceived that a literary woman must be a very respectable character, especially when morality was the subject of her writings. The absurdities of Madame de Puisieux furnished

me with a topic for reflection. Her conversation was as little indicative of talent as her caprices were of sense. I began to perceive it was possible to store up reason for a public occasion, without making much use of it in one's own affairs; and I thought that perhaps the men who made a jest of female authors were not otherwise to blame than in applying exclusively to them what is equally true of themselves. Thus in a round of life very circumscribed did I find means to accumulate a fund of observations. I was placed in solitude, it is true, but yet on the confines of a world where I saw a variety of objects without being encumbered by any. The concerts of Madame Lépine offered me a fresh point of view. I have already said that Lépine was a pupil of Pigale: he was, indeed, his right hand. At Rome he had married a woman who, as I presume, had been a cantatrice, and whom his family had at first beheld with disfavor, but who proved by the propriety of her conduct that their disdain was ill-founded.

She had formed at her house a company of amateurs, skilled performers, to which none were admitted but those whom she called good

company. It met every Thursday, and my mother often conducted me thither. It was here I heard Jarnowich, St. George, Duport, Guérin, and many others. Here too I saw the wits of both sexes: Mademoiselle Morville, Madame Benoît, Sylvain Maréchal, etc., together with haughty baronesses, smart abbés, old chevaliers, and young fops. What a pleasant magic lantern! The apartments of Madame Lépine, rue Neuve Saint Eustache, were not remarkably fine, nor was the concert room spacious; but it opened into another apartment, of which the folding-doors were kept open: there, placed in the circle, you had the combined advantage of hearing the music, seeing the authors, and conversing in the intervals. Seated close to my mother, and maintaining the silence that custom prescribes to young women, I was all eyes and ears — unless we chanced for a moment to be in private with Madame Lépine, when I put a few questions to her, in order to illustrate to myself by her answers such observations as I had made.

One day this lady proposed to my mother to accompany her to a "charming" assembly, held at the house of a man of wit, whom we had sometimes seen at Madame Lépine's. There

was to be a feast of reason, a flow of soul, a reunion of the wits; there were to be readings "most delightful" — in short something "delicious" was promised. The proposal, however, was several times repeated before it was accepted. "Let us go," said I at last to my mother, "I begin to know enough of the world to presume that it must be either extremely agreeable or very absurd; and should the latter be the case, we shall be sure to find for once sufficient amusement in its novelty." The business is settled; and on the following Wednesday, which was the day of M. Vâse's literary assemblies, we set off with Madame Lépine for the *barrière* of the Temple, where he resided. We mount to the third story, and arrive at a spacious room indifferently furnished, where were placed rows of rush-bottomed chairs, already partly occupied; dirty brass chandeliers, with tallow candles, illumined this resort of the Muses, the grotesque simplicity of which did not belie what I had heard of the philosophical rigor and poverty of an author. Some agreeable women, young girls, old dowagers, with a number of minor poets, virtuosos, and men of intrigue, composed this brilliant circle.

The master of ceremonies, seated before a table which formed a desk, opened the *séance* by reading a poetic effusion of his own, the subject of which was a pretty little lap-dog that the old Marchioness de Préville always carried in her muff, and which she now exhibited to the company; for she was present, and thought herself obliged to gratify the auditors with a sight of the hero of the piece. The *bravos* and plaudits of the whole room paid homage to the fancy of M. Vâse, who, highly satisfied with himself, was to have yielded his seat to M. Delpêches, a poet who wrote little comic dramas for the theatre of Audinot, upon which he was accustomed to take the judgment of the society, or, in other words, the encouragement of its applause; but, either because of a sore throat, or the want of some verses in several of his scenes, or some other cause, he was prevented from attending. Imbert, author of the "Judgment of Paris," accordingly took the chair, and read an agreeable trifle, which was also extolled to the skies. A further distinction was in store for him. Mademoiselle de la Cossonnière succeeded him with a "Farewell to Colin," which, if not very ingenious, was at least meltingly

tender. It was known that the lines were addressed to Imbert, who was about to undertake a journey; and compliments fell upon him in showers. Imbert acquitted his muse and himself by saluting all the females in the assembly. This brisk and gay ceremony, conducted however with decorum, was not at all pleasing to my mother, and appeared in so strange a light to me as to give me an air of embarrassment. After an epigram or couplet in which there was nothing remarkable, a pompous declaimer recited some verses in praise of Madame Benoît, who was present. Let me here say a word as to this lady, for the sake of those who have not read her romances, which were dead long before the Revolution, and upon which thick dust will have gathered long before these memoirs see the light.

Albine was born at Lyons, as I have read in the "History of the Illustrious Women of France by a Society of Men of Letters:" a history, in which I have been astonished to find the names of women (for instance, Madame Puisieux, Madame Champion, Madame Benoît, and others) that I met in company, and of whom some are still alive, or have quitted only within a few years their terrestrial abode.

Married to the designer Benoît, she had accompanied him to Rome, and had there been admitted into the Academy *des Arcades.* Lately become a widow, and still in mourning for her husband, she had settled at Paris, where she made verses and novels, sometimes without committing them to paper; addicted herself to gaming, and visited women of quality, who paid in presents of money or clothes for the pleasure of having a female wit at their tables.

Madame Benoît had been handsome; the cares of the toilet and the desire of pleasing, prolonged beyond the age in which they are sure of success, still procured her some conquests. Her eyes courted them with such ardor, her bosom, always displayed, palpitated so anxiously to obtain them, that it was cruel not to grant to the frankness of the desire and the facility of satisfying it, what men bestow in general so readily, when not restricted to constancy. Madame Benoît's air of undisguised voluptuousness was something perfectly new to me. I had seen in the public walks those priestesses of pleasure, whose indecency announced in the most offensive manner their profession; but here was a different shade of it.

I was no less surprised at the poetical incense lavished on this lady, and the epithets of the "chaste" and "modest" Benoît, so frequently repeated in the verses, and which obliged her sometimes to screen her eyes with her fan, while some individuals of the other sex rapturously applauded these encomiums, which they doubtless conceived to be admirably applied. I recalled to mind what my readings had taught me on the subject of gallantry, and calculated what corruption of heart must be added thereto by the manners of the age and the disorders of the court, and what vulgarity of taste. I saw effeminate men bestowing their admiration on flimsy verses and paltry talents, and devoting themselves to the seduction of all women indiscriminately, doubtless without loving any; for whoever attaches himself to the happiness of a chosen and beloved object is not ambitious of the favors of the crowd. I felt the pang of disgust and misanthropy in the midst of objects that excited my imagination, and I returned to my solitude filled with melancholy. We never repeated our visits to M. Vâse; one had been sufficient to satiate me, and had it been otherwise, the salute of Imbert and the panegyric of

Madame Benoît, would scarcely have induced my mother to accompany me again. The *musicale* of the Baron de Back, very pleasant in general, but sometimes also a little tedious by the pretensions of this melomaniac, did not see us much oftener, notwithstanding the cards of invitation that the politeness of Madame Lépine made her continually offer us. The same reserve was extended to that gathering known as the *amateurs' concert.* We went there but once, accompanied by a M. Boyard de Creusy, who had amused himself in inventing a new method for the guitar, of which he had begged permission from my mother to offer me a copy. He was a man of extremely polished manners; and I mention him particularly because he has had the good sense to believe that, in a situation still regarded by the vulgar as elevated, I should see with pleasure those with whom I had not been unacquainted in my youth. He called on me at the Hôtel de l'Intérieur while Roland was in the ministry; and my reception has assuredly convinced him that I attached value and pleasure to the remembrance of a time upon which I can look back with honor, as I can indeed upon every stage of my existence.

As to public places of amusement, they were still worse than these concerts; my mother never attended them, and I was taken but once during her life to the Opera, and once to the Théâtre Français: I was then about sixteen or seventeen. "The Union of Love and the Arts," by Floquet, offered little in the music, and still less in the drama, that was capable of causing the smallest illusion, or of sustaining in any degree the idea I had formed of an enchanting spectacle. The coldness of the subject, the incoherence of the scenes, the incongruity of the ballets, displeased me; I was still more offended by the dress of the dancers; they had not yet discarded hoops; and nothing could be more ludicrous than their appearance. Accordingly I thought the critique of Piron on the wonderful charms of the Opera to be an exaggeration greatly beyond the truth. At the Théâtre Français I saw "L'Écossaise," which was as little calculated to inspire me with enthusiasm for the drama; the performance of Dumesnil alone delighted me. My father sometimes took me to the shows at the fairs, the coarseness of which greatly disgusted me. I thus became armed against every temptation to

play the *bel-esprit*, precisely as the Spartan children were against intoxication, by the sight of its excess. My imagination felt none of the emotions which the fascination of the theatre might have caused, had I witnessed a representation of some of its best performances; and I was content to peruse in my closet the works of the great masters of the drama, and to enjoy at leisure the contemplation of their beauties.

A young man, a constant attendant at Madame Lépine's concerts, had taken upon himself occasionally to call at our house to inquire for us, in the name of Madame Lépine, when any absence longer than usual gave reason to think that we had been indisposed. A polite air, an agreeable vivacity, a smattering of wit, and, above all, the rareness of his visits, excused this little piece of finesse, ingeniously contrived to procure admission to the house. At last Lablancherie hazarded his declaration. — But as I now come to the history of my suitors, it is proper to make them file before the reader *en masse* — an admirable expression, that may serve as a date to my writing, and also recall the glorious period when everything decreed

was *en masse*, in spite of the greatest possible subdivision of tastes and inclinations.

The reader cannot have forgotten the Spanish Colossus, with hands like Esau's, that M. Mignard, whose politeness I have recorded, and whose name contrasted so comically with his figure. After confessing that he was capable of teaching me nothing further on the guitar, he had begged the liberty of coming sometimes to hear me, and he called at distant intervals, but without always finding us at home. Flattered with the proficiency of his pupil, regarding it as his own work, and proceeding from this principle to attribute to himself a sort of right or excuse for his pretensions, and having besides given himself out for a nobleman of Malaga whom misfortunes had reduced to the necessity of having recourse to his musical talents, he thought proper to fall in love with me. Absurd excuses for his folly were not lacking, and, in fine, he resolved to demand me in marriage, at the same time not having the courage to make his request in person. The remonstrances of the friend whom he requested to undertake this commission for him did not change his design, and it was accordingly fulfilled. It was followed

of course by a prohibition to enter our doors again, accompanied with those civilities which are due to the unfortunate. The jests of my father informed me of what had passed; he was fond of detailing to me the applications made to him on my account; and as he was not a little haughty, he did not spare the persons who thus exposed themselves to his ridicule.

Poor Mozon was become a widower; he had got rid of the wen that embellished his left cheek; and proposed setting up his cabriolet. I was then fifteen, and he was engaged to complete my dancing. His imagination kindled; he was not deficient in a high opinion of his art, and would have thought Marcel was very reasonable in making proposals to me; artist for artist, why should he not enter the lists? He made known his wishes, and was dismissed like Mignard.

From the moment a young female attains the age that announces maturity, swarms of suitors hover round her person, like bees about the newly expanded flower.

Educated so austerely, and living so retired a life, I could inspire but one design; and the respectable character of my mother, the appear-

ance of some fortune, the circumstance of being an only child, might of themselves render me an object of attraction to a number of persons.

They presented themselves in crowds; but, from the difficulty of obtaining a personal introduction, they usually addressed themselves in writing to my parents. My father brought me all letters of this nature. Aside from what was stated in them as to the rank and fortune of the writers, the mode in which they were expressed greatly influenced my opinion. I undertook to make a rough draft of the answers, which my father transcribed with exactness. I made him dismiss my suitors with dignity, without giving room for hope or resentment. The youth of our quarter passed thus in review, and in the majority of instances I had no difficulty in persuading my parents to approve my refusals. My father looked only to riches; and his pretensions for me were such that the suitor who was but newly established, or whose income was not such as to render him a "good match," had no chance at all of his vote; but, when satisfied in these particulars, it gave him pain that I would not consent to the match. Here began those differences between my father

and me which from this period were every day augmenting. He loved and esteemed trade, because he regarded it as the source of riches; I detested and despised it, because I considered it as the spring of fraud and avarice.

My father felt that I could not accept a shopkeeper, properly so called; his vanity would not suffer him to entertain the idea; but he could not conceive that the elegant jeweller, who only fingers the rich trinkets from which he derives immense profits, was beneath my acceptance; especially, too, when he could plead a business so well established as to promise a rapid and splendid fortune. But the spirit of this jeweller, as well as of the little mercer whom he regards as below him, and of the rich manufacturer who holds himself superior to both, appeared to me absorbed alike by the lust of gold and the calculations for amassing it; pursuits totally foreign to the elevated ideas, and the refined and delicate sentiments by which I was accustomed to appreciate existence.

Occupied from my infancy in considering the relations of man in society; nourished with the purest morality; familiarized with the noblest

examples; should I have lived with Plutarch and all the philosophers, only to be yoked at last to a tradesman, who would neither judge nor feel in any circumstance of life like myself?

As I have said, my discreet mother wished that I should be as much at home in the kitchen as in the drawing-room, at the market as on the promenade. After my return from the convent I continued to accompany her when she made her purchases for the house, and at last she allowed me to make them myself, sending an old servant with me. The butcher with whom we dealt had lost a second wife, and found himself still young, with a fortune of fifty thousand crowns, which he proposed to augment. I knew nothing of these particulars, and saw no more than that I was well served, and with a profusion of civilities. I was much surprised at seeing this slayer of oxen frequently on Sundays, in the course of our excursions, dressed in a handsome suit of black, and with fine lace to his linen; upon which occasions he merely presented himself to my mother, made her a very low bow and passed on. This practice continued a whole summer. I was taken sick; every morning

the butcher sent to inquire if there was anything he could do for us, and to offer every accommodation in his power. This sufficiently broad hint of his pretensions made my father smile; and one day, when a Mademoiselle Michon, a lady of a grave and devout turn, came in all ceremony to demand me on the part of the butcher, my father, vastly amused, led her by the hand to my closet. "You know, my dear Manon," said he to me, gravely, "that I have made it a principle to put no force upon your inclinations. It is proper, however, that I should state to you a proposal that has just been made to me in your behalf." He then repeated what Mademoiselle Michon had been saying to him. I bit my lips, and was a little mortified that this frolic of my father reduced me to the necessity of an answer, which he ought to have taken upon himself. "You know, my dear papa," replied I, mimicking his tone, "that I have made a firm resolution not to quit my present situation, in which I am so happy, for some years to come. You will, therefore, act in this matter as you see proper;" and saying this I immediately withdrew.

"Upon my soul," said my father, the next time he saw me, "the reason you gave to Mademoiselle Michon is an excellent scheme for keeping all the young men at a distance."

"Indeed, papa," said I, "I did no more than repay your frolic, by an expression very becoming in the mouth of a girl; and I left it to you to give a formal refusal; a task which it would have been wrong in me to take upon myself."

"Well, you are very well out of that affair. But if our friend the butcher does not suit you, tell me what sort of a man you must have."

"Indeed," said I, "if I am hard to please, it is really due to yourself; you have accustomed me to reflect, and suffered me to study. I know not what sort of man I shall marry; but it shall never be one with whom I cannot converse, and who is not able to think my thoughts, and share my sentiments."

"There are men to be found in the mercantile class who are both polite and intelligent."

"Yes; but not according to my way of thinking; their politeness consists in a few phrases and bows, and as to their knowledge it is confined to their ledgers, and would afford but little assistance in the education of my children."

"But you would educate them yourself."

"The task would seem a hard one if it were not shared by the man to whom they owed their existence."

"Think you that the wife of Lempereur is not happy? They have lately retired from business, and are now purchasing places, keeping an excellent table, and receiving the best company."

"I am no judge of the happiness of another, and mine is not dependent on wealth; I conceive that the strictest union of hearts is requisite to conjugal felicity; nor can I connect myself with a man who does not resemble me; it will even be necessary that he should be my superior, for since both nature and the laws have given the superiority to his sex, I should blush for my husband if he did not truly possess it."

"You must have, then, some advocate, I suppose? But let me tell you, these sages of the robe are not the men best calculated to promote the happiness of a woman. They have too much pride and too little money."

"But, *mon Dieu!* papa, I do not appraise men by the color of their coats, nor have I said that he must be of this profession or of that, but a man that I can love."

"Yet, if I understand you right, you suppose such a man is not to be found in the whole circle of commerce?"

"I confess it appears to me difficult. I have never yet seen in that class of life a man to my liking; besides, I dislike the occupation itself."

"Nevertheless, the lot of the merchant's wife, who lives at ease in her own rooms while her husband carries on a thriving business in his shop, is by no means a hard one. Witness Madame d'Argens: she understands diamonds as well as her husband does, bargains with the courtiers in his absence, and would doubtless carry on the business by herself, should she be left a widow. Their fortune is already considerable, and they have a share in the company which has just made a purchase of Bagnolet. You, Manon, have an excellent understanding, and having read the treatise in my library upon precious stones, must be particularly qualified for such an occupation. Your judgment would inspire confidence; you would do with your customers whatever you pleased; and could you have fancied Delorme, Dabreuil, or Lobligeois, what an agreeable life you might have led!"

"Hold, my dear father: I have too often observed that little success can be expected from commerce, unless by selling dear what has been bought cheap, by extortion on the one hand, and robbing the poor artisan of his due, on the other. Never will I give myself up to such practices, and never shall I respect the man who from morning to night can devote his time to them. I should wish to be a good and virtuous wife; but how should I remain true to a man who held no place in my esteem, admitting the possibility of my marrying such a one? To me it appears that selling diamonds and selling pastry are very much the same thing, except that the latter has a fixed price, requires less deceit, but soils the fingers more. I like neither the one nor the other."

"Do you suppose then that there are no honest tradesmen?"

"I will not absolutely say that; but I am persuaded the number is small; and let them be ever so honest, they have not all that I require in a husband."

"You require a good deal, I see; but supposing you do not find this idol of your imagination?"

"In that case I will die single."

"That may be a harder task than you imagine. As to the other point, you will have time enough to think of it. But remember, *ennui* will come at last; the crowd will have vanished; and you know the fable!"

"Oh! I will avenge myself of such an injustice by taking care to merit the happiness from which I am excluded."

"Now are you again in the clouds! Well, it may be pleasant enough to soar to these heights, but difficult, I fear, to remain there. Do not forget besides that I should like to have grandchildren before I am too old."

"I should be perfectly willing to give them to you," thought I, as my father put an end to the dialogue by withdrawing; "but not by a husband that my heart disapproves." I felt a transient cloud of melancholy while I considered the character of my suitors, among whom there was not one of a temper correspondent to my own; but this sensation soon subsided. I felt that I was at present happy, and I shed the light of a vague hope upon the future. It was, as it were, the plenitude of an actual happiness, overflowing its banks, and communicating its

character to a period and situation that did not yet exist.

"Shall I suit you this time, mademoiselle?" said my father one day, with a feigned gravity, and an air of satisfaction which was always apparent when an application had been made to him: — "Read that letter."

It was very well written as to the imagery and style, and called more than one blush into my cheeks. M. Morizot de Rozain certainly said an abundance of pleasant things, but at the same time did not forget to remark that his name might be found in the peerage of his province. I thought it absurd and indelicate in him to make a parade of an advantage which he knew me not to possess, and of which he had no reason to suppose that I was ambitious. "Here is still room for hesitation," said I, shaking my head, "but we will hear what this personage has to say for himself: a letter or two more will give us the soundings of the shore. So let us prepare an answer." Whenever writing was in question, my father was charmingly tractable, and copied without reluctance whatever I put into his hands. I amused myself with my assumed position, discussed my interests with all the

gravity of the occasion, and in a style suitable to the parental character. We had no less than three explanatory letters from M. de Rozain, which I preserved for a long time because they were extremely well written. They proved that mere powers of mind were not with me a sufficient qualification in a husband, unless there were also superiority of judgment, and those indefinable but palpable qualities of soul the lack of which nothing can supply. Moreover, M. Rozain was an advocate in name only; my present fortune was too small for two, nor were his qualities such as to tempt me to overlook that obstacle.

In proposing to marshal my suitors *en masse*, it was not my intention to run through the entire list; and from this I shall doubtless be readily excused. My sole aim was to convey the oddity of my situation, beset as I was by the addresses of so many admirers whom I did not know even by sight, and enjoying so complete a freedom of deliberation and choice. I sometimes noted at church or on the promenade some stranger curiously scrutinizing or following me; and then I would say to myself: "I shall soon have a letter to write for papa." But I saw not

once among them a figure that specially struck or pleased me.

I have remarked that Lablancherie had had the ingenuity to introduce himself to our house, probably that he might reconnoitre the country before advancing in force. Though still very young, he had already travelled and read a good deal, and had even published a book. His work was of no great merit, but it contained some good ideas and sound morality. He called it an "Abstract of my Travels, for the Instruction of Parents," a title certainly not distinguished for modesty; but, as he supported himself upon the most respectable philosophical authorities, quoted them happily, and inveighed with an honest indignation, against that negligence on the part of parents which is too frequently the cause of the irregularities of youth, he was in some measure to be excused. Lablancherie, short, dark, and ordinary, did not fire my imagination; but his mind was by no means displeasing to me, and I thought I could perceive that my person was still less displeasing to him. One evening, returning with my mother from visiting some relations, we found my father in a sort of revery. "I have news for you," said

he to us, smiling. "Lablancherie, who has been here for more than two hours, and is but this moment gone, has made me his confidant; and as what he has intrusted to me relates to you, mademoiselle, in particular, I suppose you must be made acquainted with it." (The consequence was not strictly necessary, but it was customary with my father to infer it). "He is in love, it seems, and has offered himself; but, as he has little or no property, I have endeavored to convince him of the folly of the proposal. He is of the long robe, and means to purchase an office; but as his own fortune is inadequate, he proposes to supply the deficiency with the dower of his wife; and, as you are an only child, he conceives that, for the first year or two, we might all live together. He has said a number of those fine things upon the subject which readily suggest themselves to a youthful imagination, and which it conceives to be unanswerable; but parents who consult the welfare of their children want something more solid to determine them. Let him purchase a place and establish himself first; there will be time enough afterwards for marriage; but to make marriage the preliminary would be plac-

ing the cart before the horse. Besides we must look a little into his character and connections; a business indeed that is soon despatched. I had rather he were less of a gentleman, and that he possessed instead an income of a few thousand crowns; he is, however, a good sort of young man. We talked a long time upon this subject. My objections were grievous to him, but he heard me with patience, and begged that at least I would not forbid him the house, to which I consented, upon condition that his visits should not be more frequent than usual. I told him that I should say nothing to you, Manon, of what has passed between us; but as I know your discretion, I do not like to keep anything from you."

A few questions from my mother, and some observations as to the wisdom of one's looking before one leaps in these cases saved me the embarrassment of a reply, but did not prevent me from thinking the matter over for myself.

My father's logic was just, but at the same time the proposals of the young man were not unreasonable, and I felt disposed to see him and to study his character with additional interest and curiosity. Opportunities for doing this

seldom occurred; some months elapsed; at last Lablancherie departed for Orléans, and I saw him no more till two years after. During the interval I had nearly been married to Gardanne, a physician, a match which one of our relations, Madame Desportes, had strongly recommended. This lady, born in Provence, had wedded a tradesman at Paris, and being soon after left a widow with one daughter, she had continued that business of trading in diamonds which my father found so agreeable. Wit, urbanity, and an insinuating address, had raised her to general estimation, and it appeared as if she continued in business merely to oblige those who dealt with her. Without going out of her apartment, where she received a highly respectable circle of friends (who were largely her clients as well), she preserved her little fortune and her ease without loss and without addition. Advanced considerably in age, she was assisted by her daughter, who, out of filial affection, had rejected all suitors, preferring the intimate and charming union in which she lived with her mother.

Gardanne was a countryman of Madame Desportes. Natural good sense, vivacity, learn-

ing, and an extreme desire of success, gave reason to hope that this young doctor would rise to eminence in a career which he had already begun under promising circumstances. Madame Desportes, who received him with that patronizing kindness suitable to her age and character, and which she had the art of rendering amiable, conceived the project of making him the husband of her niece. But, dying before it was ripe, she bequeathed to her daughter the same zeal for its accomplishment.

Gardanne both wished and feared the connection. In his calculation of the advantages and inconveniences of the grand hymeneal partnership, he was not, like my romantic brain, attached to the single idea of conformity of character and sentiment; he reckoned up everything, *pro* and *con*. My portion would be only twenty thousand livres; but the smallness of this sum was compensated by expectations. The pecuniary arrangements were made without my knowing anything of the matter, and the *bargain* was absolutely struck, when I was first told, in general terms, of a physician who was destined to be my husband. The profession did not displease me; it promised an enlight-

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ened mind; but it was necessary I should know the person. A walk to Luxembourg was contrived; we were in danger of being overtaken by a shower, or at least so it was pretended, and we took refuge in the house of a Mademoiselle de la Barre, a great Jansenist, and a friend of Madame Desportes. She was delighted at the accident, and was offering us some refreshment, when the physician, with his countrywoman, entered, under the pretext of paying her a visit.

We examined each other narrowly, but without any appearance of doing so on my part, though I suffered nothing to escape me. My cousin had an air of triumph, as much as to say: "I did not describe her as handsome; but what do you think of her?" My good mother appeared tender and pensive: Mademoiselle de la Barre was bountiful of her wit, and did the honors of her sweetmeats and confectionery. The physician chattered away, and made great havoc among the sugar-plums, observing, with a gallantry that smelled somewhat of the lamp, that nothing pleased his palate so well as what was sweet; to which our hostess rejoined, with a soft voice, a blush, and a smile, that it was said

indeed men had a taste that way, she supposed, because they stood in need of that treatment which sweetness inspires. The gallant doctor was delighted at the epigram. My father would willingly have given his benediction on the spot, and was so extremely polite that I was absolutely angry with him. The doctor retired first to pay his evening visits; my father, my mother and myself returned precisely as we came. And this is what is called an *interview*. Mademoiselle Desportes, a stickler for punctilios, had arranged all this, because, forsooth, a man who has views of marriage ought not to enter the house in which the lady resides till he has been accepted; which done, the contract is then to be prepared, and the union solemnized forthwith. This was the law and the prophets. A physician, in the garb of his profession, is seldom alluring in the eyes of a young woman, nor could I indeed, at any period of life, conceive of love in a periwig. Accordingly Gardanne with his three-tailed peruke, his doctoral dignity, his southern accent, and his black eyebrows, appeared more likely to cure than to impart a fever. This was the feeling that I experienced, not a reflection that I made; my

ideas of marriage were too serious and austere, to make it possible for me to find the smallest circumstance at which to laugh in such a proposal. "Well," said my mother to me, in a tone of tender inquiry, "what think you of this man? Will he suit you?"

"My dear mamma, it is impossible as yet for me to tell."

"But you can certainly tell if he has inspired you with any dislike."

"Neither dislike nor inclination; so that there is still room for either of these sentiments."

"And what answer then is to be given, should a proposal be made in form?"

"Is the answer to be binding?"

"Assuredly, if we pass our word to a man of honor, we must adhere to it."

"And what if he should afterwards displease me?"

"A reasonable young woman, not swayed by caprice, having once weighed the motives that determine her in so important a crisis, is in no danger of changing her opinion."

"And must I really decide, then, upon this single interview?"

"Not exactly that; the intimacy of M. Gar-

danne with our family makes it easy for us to judge of his condition, his manners, and, with a little inquiry, of his character. These are the principal points in determining your choice; the seeing him is a mere matter of form necessary to the adjustment of certain preliminaries."

"Ah! my mamma, I am in no haste to be married."

"I believe it, my child; but we are anxious to see you settled; and you have now attained the proper age. You have refused many offers from tradesmen, and from your situation you will probably be exposed to many more. It appears to be your resolution never to accept a husband from that class of life; the present offer is of a different kind, and, to all appearances, quite unexceptionable; be careful therefore that you do not lightly reject it."

"But surely, mamma, there can be no immediate hurry; M. Gardanne himself is probably not yet decided, for it is the first time he has seen me."

"I acknowledge the force of your objection; but if this be the only one it will, perhaps, speedily be removed. I will not, therefore, require an instant answer. Reflect upon the

matter; and two days hence let me know the result." Saying this, my mother kissed me, and withdrew.

Reason and nature so powerfully combine to convince a discreet and modest young woman that it is incumbent on her to marry, that there is no room for deliberation but upon the choice of her companion. Now, as to this particular choice, the arguments of my mother were by no means destitute of force. I considered, moreover, whatever might be said to the contrary, that my provisional acceptance could never be construed into an absolute engagement; that it was absurd to suppose, because I had consented to see at the house of my father a man proposed to me for a husband, that I was therefore contracted; and I felt that, should he fail to please me, no consideration whatever ought to induce me to proceed further. So without clinching the matter by a positive refusal, I withheld my decision until time should enable me to judge.

We were about setting out for the country, where we had purposed to spend a fortnight. To delay this journey in expectation of a suitor I conceived to be indelicate, and my mother

was of my opinion; but before we departed, Mademoiselle de la Barre arrived one morning ceremoniously dressed to demand me, as it is called, on the part of the doctor. My parents returned the polite generalities usual when one accepts a proposal, with a proviso for later consideration. Mademoiselle de la Barre claimed, on the part of the suitor, permission to pay his respects. It was granted. Mademoiselle Desportes, always methodical and accurate, conceived that she was the person to bring forward her protégé, and a family dinner, at which Mademoiselle de la Barre and a female relation were present, served as an occasion for introducing the gentleman into my father's house. The next day we set out for the country, designing to pass there the precise time necessary for inquiries. The second interview was no more impressive than the first; yet I saw in Gardanne a man of intelligence with whom it was possible for a thinking woman to take up her abode; and, inexperienced as I was, I calculated that where it was possible to carry on a rational conversation, there was a sufficient prospect of happiness in marriage.

My mother fancied she saw in him indications

of an imperious temper. For my part, I had perceived no such traces. Habituated to study and watch over myself, to govern my affections, to regulate my imagination, imbued also with the highest conception of the duties of a wife, I could not conceive how a character a little more or a little less indulgent could be interesting to me or could exact from me more than I should exact from myself. I reasoned as a philosopher who calculates, or as a recluse ignorant of men and of the passions. I took my own heart, tranquil, affectionate, generous, and candid, for the common measure of the morality of my species. I have long harbored this error. It has been the true source of my delusions; and I am the more anxious to mention it, as it is really the key to my conduct and career. I carried with me into the country a sort of melancholy inquietude, different from that agitation with which the beauties of nature usually inspired me, and that served to heighten its charms. I found myself on the verge of a new existence; I was about to quit, perhaps, my excellent mother, my beloved studies, my privacy, in fine my independence, for a state which I could not well define, and which would impose

on me the gravest obligations. I thought it glorious to have them to discharge, and conceived myself formed to undertake them. But the prospect was not clear to my view: I experienced both the desire and the fear of uncertainty. Mademoiselle Desportes had made me promise to write to her; I redeemed my promise; but, after the lapse of a fortnight, I discovered that she was much mortified. My father, who was in the habit of taking everything literally, would have thought that he failed in the duty of a parent and in a proper concern for his daughter if he had not made all the customary inquiries. Gardanne had been introduced to us by one of our relations, who had known him from his cradle, and was acquainted with his family. All possible information had been afforded, but that was of no consequence; my father wrote, at the outset of the negotiations, to three or four persons in Provence for the fullest particulars respecting M. Gardanne's family and history. Nor did he stop even here; he employed indirect means of learning from servants and tradesmen the temper and economy of his future son-in-law. Finally he went to visit him; and, with a tact equal to that which he had dis-

played in his inquiries, he pretended to know all. He cited to him as a man whom he ought to esteem, a countryman with whom he had quarrelled, and concluded his remarks with certain premature counsels delivered in the accents and tone of a father. Thus Gardanne received, at one and the same time, letters from the country in which he was twitted upon the minute inquiries that had been made about him, news of the inquisition that had been carried on at his home, and, finally, a pedagogical homily from his intended father-in-law. Piqued and irritated, he repairs to the house of Mademoiselle Desportes, complains, with the vivacity of a Southron, of the strange conduct of a man, whose daughter, though extremely pleasing, has the misfortune to have so singular a father. Mademoiselle Desportes, no less proud and fiery, resents on her part his being so little in love with her cousin as to lay stress on these trifles, and does not attempt to disguise her resentment. All these circumstances came to my knowledge at once, and I embraced with eagerness the occasion to put an end to all doubt, and declare my resolution never to receive M. Gardanne on the footing of a lover. Thus

ended a negotiation, conducted with such haste that Gardanne expected the solemnity to take place within a fortnight after my return. I was relieved at escaping a danger that menaced me so nearly; my mother, terrified at the impetuosity of the doctor, was satisfied to be thus delivered from her fears; my father endeavored to hide his chagrin under the veil of a lordly dignity; while as to my cousin, she asserted hers by forbidding the doctor to enter her house again. Mademoiselle de la Barre told her, five years after, that this marriage was written in heaven; that poor Gardanne was determined to contract no other; and that Providence, the ways of which are inscrutable, was secretly preparing the way for this desirable union. How sagacious a prophecy! Of almost as much effect and fidelity as the famous note of Ninon de l'Enclos to the Marquis de la Châtre.

My mother's health began insensibly to decline. She had experienced an attack of the palsy, which she described to me under the milder name of rheumatism, for she desired to spare me the anxiety I should have felt had I known the truth. Naturally serious and taciturn, she became every day more so; she

grew fond of solitude, and would frequently send me to walk with a favorite servant, unwilling herself to quit her apartment. She often talked of my settling in life, and lamented that I had not been able to choose a husband. One day in particular, she urged me, with a melancholy earnestness, to accept a young jeweller who had made proposals in form. "He has in his favor," said she, "a great reputation for integrity, regular habits, and an easy fortune, which may become a brilliant one; and this last circumstance counts for much in a case where the man himself, it must be owned, is somewhat commonplace. He is acquainted with your singular way of thinking, professes high esteem for you, will be proud to follow your counsels, and has declared that he has no objection to his wife becoming the nurse of his children. You will have him in leading-strings."

"But I do not like a husband that must be led, he would be too unwieldy a child."

"You are certainly a singular girl! You will not rule, yet you will not have a master."

"Let us understand each other, dear mamma. I would not at all wish a man to dictate to me,

for he would only provoke me to resist; nor should I wish to dictate to my husband. Either I am very much mistaken, or these lords of creation six feet high with beards on their chins seldom fail to feel that they are the stronger sex; now the good man who should think proper to keep me in mind of this superiority would certainly provoke me; and I should blush for him, on the contrary, if he allowed me to rule."

"I understand. You prefer a man who, while obeying you, should fancy he was having his own way."

"No, not that exactly. I dislike to submit, but I do not find myself made to rule; it would be a burden to me; my reason finds enough to do in governing myself. I would gain the affections of an individual worthy my esteem; one, with whose will a compliance would be no disgrace to me, and who would not find his happiness lessened by complying with mine, as far at least as reason and affection might authorize."

"Happiness, my child, is not so often composed of this perfection of relations and congeniality as you may imagine: if it depended

upon nothing else, there would little of it be found in most of our matches."

"Then I know of none that I should envy."

"Perhaps so; still, among these marriages that you despise, there may be many preferable to remaining single. I may be called out of the world sooner than you imagine; you would remain with your father; he is still young, and you know not the chagrins to which my tenderness leads me to fear you may be exposed. Could I see you united, before I die, to a worthy man, how tranquil would it render the last moments of my existence!"

These words of my mother overwhelmed me with grief; she seemed to lift a veil from a sombre and terrifying future which I had not so much as suspected. I had never thought of losing her; and the mere idea of this calamity, which she spoke of as approaching, filled me with terror; a cold shivering crept over the whole surface of my frame; I fixed on her my wild and eager eyes, from which a faint smile on her part drew forth a torrent of tears.

"Why, my dear child, are you so alarmed? Must we not in our calculations weigh possibilities? I am not ill, though at a period of

life subject to swift and fatal changes; but it is in health that we must provide ourselves with consolations for the time of sickness, and the present occasion furnishes me with an opportunity of doing so. A worthy man offers you his hand; you are past twenty, and must no longer expect the crowd of suitors by which, during the last five years, you have been surrounded. I may be snatched away from you. Do not reject a husband — who has not, it is true, the delicacy to which you affix such value (a quality very rare even among those who pretend to it), but who will love and cherish you and with whom you may be happy."

"Yes, my dear mamma," I exclaimed with a deep sigh, "as happy as you have been!"

My mother was agitated, and made no reply, and never from that moment importuned me upon the subject of this or any other marriage. The word had escaped me, like the expression of a strong and sudden feeling upon which we have not taken time to reflect, and the effect it produced convinced me too fully of its truth.

A stranger might have perceived at the first glance the disparity that existed between my father and mother; but who could feel like me

all the excellence of the latter? Meanwhile, I had little calculated what she might suffer. Accustomed from my infancy to see the profoundest peace reign in the house, I was not a judge of what it cost her to maintain it. My father loved us both tenderly. A look of reproach I will not say, but an air of discontent had never clouded the face of my mother: whenever her opinion was not that of her husband, and she had been unable to convince him, she appeared to relinquish her own view without the smallest scruple. It was only within a few years, that, provoked at times by the arguments of my father, I had occasionally mingled in their disputes. Gaining, however, some degree of influence, I soon began to use it with freedom. Whether it was from novelty or from weakness, my father yielded to me more readily than to his wife; and I always exerted myself as her champion. I became, so to speak, the watch-dog of my mother. I would not suffer her to be vexed in my presence, and was sure upon these occasions, either by assumed or real anger, always to make the assailant let go his hold. What is still more extraordinary is, that, reserved as my mother

herself upon this subject, not a word escaped me in private inconsistent with the respect due to the paternal character. I used in her defence the force and authority of reason, when address was insufficient; but afterwards, when alone with her, my lips were sealed as to what had passed. For her sake I could combat even against her husband; but this husband, when absent, became my father, of whom neither of us ever spoke but in commendation. Meanwhile I perceived that my father had gradually lost his habits of industry. The affairs of his parish having first diverted him, obliged him afterwards to be still more frequently from home. Insensibly dissipation mastered him; every spectacle or event drew him from his business; he acquired a taste for play; the connections formed at the tavern led him elsewhere, and the lottery lent the aid of its seductions. In haste to amass a fortune, he had engaged in outside speculations, which had not always been prosperous. This desire having at length little else to feed upon, degenerated into a rage for gaming. Ceasing to exercise his graver with the same attention as before, his skill diminished; observing a less

regular life, his faculties were impaired, his eye and hand lost their steadiness and certainty. His young workmen, neglected by the master, slackened in their industry and failed in their execution; it was soon necessary to decrease their number, his reputation and custom of course diminishing. These changes were gradual, and their effect was considerable before it was fully perceived. My mother, extremely thoughtful, began to hint to me her uneasiness, which I was cautious not to nourish by dwelling on what we could neither of us hope to remedy. I did what I could to console her; she was grown averse to walking, and I submitted to the sacrifice of leaving her sometimes for the sake of going out with my father, whom I requested to take a walk with me, hoping thereby to divert him from less innocent pursuits. He no longer sought my company, but he was still pleased to attend me, and I led him back with a sort of triumph to that excellent mother, of whose tender heart I saw all the glad emotions at our reunion. But this little stratagem was not always successful; in order not to refuse his daughter, nor at the same time be disappointed of his own pleasures, when my

father had brought me home, he would go out again, only, as he said, for an instant; but instead of returning to supper, he forgot the hour, and stayed till midnight. We had wept his absence in silence; and if I happened, at his return to tell him of our anxiety, he treated it lightly, parrying my gentle reproaches with raillery, or else retired with an air of discontent. Our domestic happiness was obscured and darkened by these clouds, but the harmony and quiet of the family remained unaltered, and the eyes of a stranger would scarcely have perceived the changes that were daily taking place.

My mother had suffered considerably for the space of more than a year from a malady of which her physicians had been totally unable to ascertain the cause. After employing to no purpose a variety of remedies, they at length advised exercise, for which she had no inclination, and the air of the country. This was upon the eve of Whitsuntide, 1773, and it was determined that we should pass our holidays at Meudon. On Sunday morning I did not wake in my customary spirits when these excursions into the country were in view. I had rested poorly, for my slumbers had been haunted by

the gloomiest dreams: we were returning (as it had seemed to me) to Paris by water, having been driven back by a storm, when, as we were stepping to the shore, a corpse that had been carried from the boat, blocked our path. Chilled with terror at the sight, I was about fearfully to examine the ghastly object — when my mother, lightly laying her hand upon my bed and calling me with her soft voice, put an end to my dream. I was rejoiced to see her, as if she had escaped some imminent danger; I stretched out my arms, and embraced her with emotion, expressing the pleasure she gave me by awaking me. I sprang out of bed, everything was soon ready, and we set off. The weather was fine, the air calm, a little boat conveyed us to the place of our destination, and the delights of the country speedily restored my serenity. My mother was better for the journey; she resumed a portion of her activity; for the second time we discovered Ville-Bonne, and its honest inmates. I had promised to visit my Agathe on the Wednesday of the holidays; we accordingly returned on the evening of Tuesday. My mother had meant to accompany me; but, fatigued with the exertion of

the preceding days, she changed her mind at the moment of my departure, and sent me with the servant. I would willingly have remained with her; but she insisted on my keeping my engagement, adding that it was no punishment to her to be alone, and that if I wished to take a turn in the public gardens, I might indulge myself.

Scarcely had I seen Agathe, when I was anxious to return. "Why are you in such haste," said she; "does any one expect you?"

"No; but something urges me to return to my mother."

"You have told me that you left her well?"

"That is true, nor does she expect me; I know not what it is that torments me, but I am anxious to be with her."

As I spoke, my heart swelled painfully, in spite of my efforts to control it.

Some persons will perhaps suppose that all these circumstances are the result of a mood that sheds its own hues upon the present and upon the immediate past. This, however, I am assured, is not the case. I am a faithful historian, and relate facts which, had it not been for the event, I should doubtless have forgotten.

Certainly it may be judged, from what has already been said of my opinions, and especially of the successive stages of my intellectual growth, that I was as little superstitious at that time as I am now credulous and orthodox. While I meditated in the sequel upon what could be the cause of what people call presentiments, I have imagined that it consists in that rapid survey which persons of a lively intelligence and strong feeling make of a crowd of evanescent circumstances, impossible to enumerate, which are rather felt than recognized, which give a tinge to the mind that the reason cannot justify, but that events ultimately appear to confirm.

The more lively the interest that we take in an object and the greater the concern we feel in everything that relates to it, the more we shall have of those physical perceptions, if I may be allowed the expression, which are afterwards styled presentiments, and which the ancients regarded as omens or suggestions from the gods.

My mother was an object to me of the tenderest regard: she approached her end without its being announced to common observers by

any exterior circumstances, and I had myself seen nothing that positively menaced it; yet I was doubtless sensible to slight and indistinct changes that affected me as it were unconsciously. I could not have said I was unhappy, because I could have assigned no reason; but I felt a haunting anxiety, my heart sank when I looked at her, and in her absence I experienced an uneasiness, that would not suffer me to continue out of her sight. I quitted Agathe with so unusual an air, that she begged me to let her hear from me immediately. I returned precipitately, without attending to the remark of my nurse that the weather was extremely favorable for a walk in the gardens. I approach the house, and find at our door a young girl of the neighborhood, who on seeing me exclaims: — "Ah! mademoiselle, your mamma is taken ill; she has just sent to my mother, who is now with her in her chamber." Struck with affright, I utter some inarticulate sounds; I rush upstairs, and find my mother sunk in an armchair, her head reclined, her eyes wild, her mouth open, her arms pendent. At sight of me her countenance lights up; she attempts to speak; but her tongue utters painfully only a

few broken words: she wished to say how impatiently she had expected me. She attempts to raise her arms; one only obeys the impulse of her will. She lifts her hand to my face, wipes away the tears that bedew it with her fingers, passes them gently over my cheeks as if to compose me. The wish to smile faintly appears in her languid features; she again endeavors to speak. Vain efforts! The palsy chains her tongue, weighs down her head, and deadens half her body. Spirits of balm, salt put into the mouth, and friction, produce no effect. In an instant I had despatched messengers after my father, and the physician; I had flown myself for two grains of emetic to the nearest apothecary's. The physician arrives, my mother is put to bed; the remedies are administered, and the disorder proceeds with a dreadful rapidity. The eyes are closed; the head, sunk on the chest, can no longer raise itself; a strong and quick respiration indicates the universal oppression. Yet she heard what was said, and, when asked if she felt much pain, pointed out the seat of her sufferings by pressing her left hand upon her forehead. I was inexpressibly active; I ordered everything, and had always

done it myself before any other person could execute it; I prepared whatever was necessary, yet appeared never to quit the bed. About ten o'clock in the evening I observe the physician call aside my father and some women who are in the apartment; I wish to know what he has proposed; they inform me that he recommends the administration of the extreme unction. I seem in a dream; the priest arrives; he prays, and does I know not what. I hold a light mechanically; I stand at the foot of the bed without answering or yielding to those who would remove me, my eyes fixed on my adored and dying mother, absorbed in a single feeling which suspends all my faculties. The light slips from my hand, and I fall senseless on the floor. They raise me: after some time I recover my consciousness, and find myself in the room adjoining the death-chamber, surrounded by the members of the family. I look toward the door, I attempt to advance; they restrain me; I make suppliant gestures to obtain permission to return. A mournful silence, and a dumb but constant opposition, is the only reply. I regain my strength; I pray, I conjure them, to let me pass; they are inexorable: I burst into a rage.

At that instant my father enters, pale and speechless; an air of fearful inquiry appears in every countenance, to which he replies by a silent movement of his eyes, that calls forth a general groan. I escape from the petrified hands of those about me; I rush impetuously forth. My mother! — she was no more! I lift up her arms; I cannot believe it. I open and close alternately the eyes that will never see me again, and that were wont to look upon me with so endearing a tenderness; I call her; I throw myself with passion on her loved form; I join my lips to hers, and try to reanimate them with my breath; I would transfuse into them my soul, and expire on the instant. I know not what ensued; I only remember that I found myself in the morning at the house of a neighbor, with M. Besnard, who then conveyed me in a carriage to his own house. I arrive; my aunt embraces me in silence, sets me before a small table, and offers me something to drink, entreating me earnestly to take it. I endeavor to comply, and fall into a swoon. They put me in bed, where I pass a fortnight between life and death in frightful convulsions. The sensation, I remember, was that of constant suffocation;

my respiration, as I have been told, was heard even from the street. I suffered a relapse, which rendered my situation still more critical, and from which I was saved only by the strength of my constitution and the attentions that were lavished on me. My good relatives had taken up with inconvenient lodgings for my better accommodation; they seemed to have gained new strength in order to recall me to life; they insisted upon nursing me themselves, and would allow no one to share their kind offices, except my cousin, Madame Trude, *née* Robineau, a young woman, who came every evening to spend the night with me, lying in the same bed, and ever vigilant to foresee and relieve the paroxysms with which I was continually seized.

Eight days were elapsed, and my grief had been unaccompanied with a tear: great sorrows have not so easy an issue. (I shed them, however, at this moment, bitter and burning; for I fear an evil still greater than what I then suffered. I have expended all my wishes for the safety of those I love; it is now more uncertain than ever! Calamities, like a dark and threatening cloud, envelop what is most dear to me; and I labor, with difficulty and pain,

to distract my attention from the present by reflecting on the past.)

An epistle from Sophie came to reopen the source of my tears; the tender voice and soothing expressions of friendship recalled my faculties, and spoke consolation to my heart. They produced an effect that medicines and physicians had solicited in vain: a new revolution took place; I wept, and was saved. The suffocation diminished; the dangerous symptoms abated, and the convulsions became less frequent; yet every painful impression renewed them.

My father presented himself to me in the sad apparel that testified our loss, which, though common to us both, I found was unequally felt and deplored. He endeavored to console me by representing that Providence disposed everything for the best, even in our calamities; that my mother had fulfilled the task assigned her in this world, in the education of her child; and that, since heaven had decreed I was to lose one of my parents, it was better that the one should remain who could be most useful to my fortune.

Assuredly my loss was irreparable, even in

this respect, as experience has but too well proved; but I did not then make this reflection; I felt only the barrenness of the intended consolation, so little adapted to my manner of thinking and feeling. I measured for the first time the gulf between my father and me; he seemed himself to tear away the reverential veil under which I had hitherto considered him. I found myself a complete orphan, since my mother was gone, and my father could never understand me: a new source of grief burst upon my already overburdened heart; I fell into the deepest despair. The tears, however, of my cousin, and the sorrow of my worthy relatives, still offered me subjects of tender emotion. Their influence prevailed, and I was snatched from the dangers that menaced my days. Alas, why did they not then terminate? It was my first affliction: by how many others has it been succeeded!

Here concludes the serene and shining epoch of those tranquil years, passed in the enjoyment of delightful sentiments and peaceful studies, and resembling the lovely mornings of spring, when the serenity of an unclouded sky, the purity of the air, the verdure of the foliage,

and the perfume of the plants, enchant all who taste the mingled delights, unfold the heart and fancy, and impart present felicity by their promises of a riper and more blissful season.

III.

September 10, 1793.

MY mother was only fifty years of age when she was so cruelly taken from me; an abscess in her head, formed in an unaccountable manner, and, only discovered by the flux that took place after her death through the nose and ears, explains the unusual stoppage with which she had been so long affected. The second shock of the palsy, in all probability, would not have proved mortal but for this affection. Her face, still fresh and youthful, showed no sign of approaching death; and her ailments appeared to be those of an age which women rarely pass without experiencing a considerable alteration. The melancholy, and even despondency, which I had discovered some time before, were due to moral causes but too apparent to me.

Our last excursions into the country seemed to have reanimated her: the very day she was

snatched from me I left her apparently well at three o'clock in the afternoon; I returned at half-past five to find her palsied; at midnight she was no more. Frail toys of a pitiless destiny! Why are sentiments so keen and projects so imposing linked with so fragile an existence?

Thus was taken from the world one of the gentlest, most lovable beings that ever graced it. Her qualities were not brilliant, but they were such as won and retained the love of all who knew her. Naturally pure and just, her virtues were the fruit of impulse, not effort. Prudent and self-poised, tender without passion, her tranquil spirit lived its days as flows some quiet stream that laves with equal complaisance the rock that holds it captive and the valley it embellishes. Her sudden loss plunged me in the profoundest grief.

"It is charming to possess sensibility, but it is unfortunate to have so much of it," said the Abbé Legrand, who came to see me at the house of my relatives. When I began to recover, the latter were eager to invite or to receive people with whom I was acquainted, in order to familiarize me gradually with the life

outside. I seemed scarcely to exist in the actual world. Absorbed in grief, I paid little attention to what was passing, speaking but seldom, and then mostly in reply to my own thoughts. At times the cherished image of her I could not forget, the poignant sense of her loss, would arise so vividly in my mind that I would shriek aloud, my outstretched arms would grow rigid, and I would fall fainting to the floor. Although incapable of application, I had however calmer intervals, during which I recollected the sorrow of my relations, their kindness, and the affectionate care of my cousin, and endeavored to diminish their anxiety. The Abbé Legrand possessed sagacity enough to discern that it was necessary to talk to me a great deal of my mother, in order to render me capable of thinking of anything else. He conversed with me about her, and led me insensibly to reflections and ideas which, without being foreign to the subject, banished the habitual recollection of her loss. As soon as he believed me sufficiently recovered to look at a book, he resolved to bring me the "Héloïse" of Jean-Jacques Rousseau; the perusal of which was in truth my first employment. I was then twenty-

MADAME ROLAND

FROM THE PAINTING BY HEINSIUS

one years of age; I had read a great deal; I was acquainted with a considerable number of writers, historians, learned men, and philosophers; but Rousseau made an impression on me similar to that which Plutarch had done when I was eight years old. It appeared that this was the proper food for my mind, and the interpreter of those ideas which I entertained before, but which he alone knew how to explain to me.

Plutarch had prepared me to become a republican; he roused that strength and stateliness of character which constitute one; he inspired me with a real enthusiasm in favor of public virtues and liberty. Rousseau pointed out to me the domestic happiness to which I could aspire, and the ineffable enjoyments which I was capable of tasting. Ah! if he is able to protect me against what are termed foibles, could he forearm me against a passion? Amidst the corrupt age in which I was doomed to live and the Revolution which I was then far from anticipating, I acquired beforehand all that could render me capable of great sacrifices and expose me to great misfortunes. Death will only be to me the term of both. I expect it, and I would not

have dreamed of filling the short interval which separates us with the recital of my private history, if calumny had not dragged me on the stage, on purpose to make a more cruel attack upon those whom she would ruin. I love to publish truths that interest not myself alone; and I wish not to conceal one, that their coherence may serve toward their demonstration.

I did not return to my father's without experiencing all the sensations inspired by the sight of those places which one has been accustomed to associate with an object that is no more. They had taken the ill-judged precaution to remove my mother's portrait, as if the void thus produced was not calculated to recall more painfully than even her picture the loss I had experienced. I instantly demanded it: it was restored. The domestic cares devolving entirely on me, I occupied myself with them; but they were not numerous in a family of only three.

I have never been able to comprehend how such cares could absorb the attention of a woman who possesses method and activity, however considerable her household may be, for in that case there are a greater number of assistants to share her labors; nothing more is necessary than a

right distribution of employments, and a little vigilance. This I discovered in a variety of different situations, during all which nothing was ever done but in consequence of my orders; and when these cares were most pressing they scarcely ever consumed more than two hours a day. Leisure will always be found when one knows how to employ her time: it is the people who do nothing that want time for everything. Besides, it is not in the least surprising that the women who pay or receive useless visits, or who think themselves badly dressed if they have not consecrated many hours to their glass, find the days long from mere lassitude, and yet too short for the performance of their duties; but I have seen what are termed notable housewives who were insupportable to the world, and even to their husbands, on account of a fatiguing pre-occupation about their household affairs. I do not know anything so disgusting as this ridiculous conduct, nor so well calculated to render a man attached to any other woman rather than his wife. She ought to appear to him to be a good housewife, but not to such a degree as to force him to search elsewhere for charms. I think that a wife should either keep,

or cause to be kept, the linen and clothes in order, nurse her children, give instructions about or even superintend the cookery, without speaking of it; and all this with a command of temper, a proper disposal of those moments which allow her an opportunity of conversing about other matters, and in such a manner as to please, in short, by her good humor as well as by the charms of her sex. I have had occasion to remark that it is nearly the same in the government of states as of families. Those famous statesmen who are always quoting their labors either leave much in arrear or render themselves offensive to every one around them: those public men that vaunt so much of, and appear so deeply involved in business, only make a noise about their difficulties because of their incapacity to overcome them, or their ignorance in the art of government.

My studies became dearer to me than before; they formed my consolation. Left still more than ever by myself, and not seldom melancholy, I felt myself under the necessity of writing. I love to render an account of my own ideas to myself, and the intervention of my pen makes them clearer. When I do not employ myself in

this way, I revise still more than I meditate: by these means I curb my imagination, and accustom myself to reasoning. I had already begun to make some collections; to these I made some additions, and entitled the whole "The Works of Leisure Hours, and various Reflections." I had no other object than by these means to fix my opinions and to possess a register of my sentiments, which I could some day compare with each other, in such a manner that their gradations or their changes might serve to myself at once as a lesson and a record. I have a pretty large packet of the "Works" of a young girl piled up in a dusty corner of my library, or in the garret. Never did I feel the slightest temptation to become one day an author; I perceived very early that a woman who acquires this title loses far more than she has gained. The men do not love, and her own sex criticise her. If her works are bad, they ridicule her; and they are right: if they are good, they ascribe them to some one else; if they are forced to acknowledge that she has discovered merit, they sift so maliciously her character, her morals, her conduct, and her talents, that they balance the reputation of her genius

by the publicity which they give to her errors.

Besides, my happiness was my chief concern; and I perceived that the public never intermeddled with the happiness of any one without marring it. I do not find anything so agreeable as to have our real value appreciated by the people with whom we live; and nothing so empty as the admiration of a few persons whom we are never likely to meet.

Alas! what an injury did those do me who took it upon them to withdraw the veil under which I loved to remain concealed! During twelve years of my life I have shared my husband's tasks, as I shared his meals, quite naturally and as a matter of course. If one part of his works happened to be quoted in which were discovered unwonted graces of style, or if a flattering reception was given to an academic trifle he was pleased to transmit to the learned societies of which he was a member, I participated in his satisfaction, without remarking the more particularly on that account, whether it was I who had composed it; and he often ended by persuading himself that he had been in a better vein than usual when he wrote

such and such a passage. During his administration, if it was necessary to express great or striking truths, I employed the whole bent of my mind; and it was but natural that its efforts should be preferable to those of a secretary. I loved my country; I was an enthusiast in the cause of liberty; I was unacquainted with any interest or any passions that could enter into competition with these; and my language ought to be pure and pathetic, as it was that of the heart and of truth.

I was so much impressed with the importance of the subject that I never thought of myself. Once only I was amused with the singularity of the relative situations. This was when employed in writing to the pope in behalf of the French artists imprisoned at Rome. A letter to the pope, in the name of the Executive Council of France, sketched secretly by the hand of a woman, in the plain cabinet, which Marat was pleased to term a "boudoir," appeared to me such a bit of humor that I laughed heartily when I had finished it.

The pleasure of these contrasts consisted in the very secrecy; but this was necessarily less attainable in a public situation, where the eye

of the clerk distinguishes the papers which he copies. There is nothing singular, however, in all this, unless it be its novelty. Why should not a woman act as secretary to her husband, without lessening his merit? It is well known that ministers cannot do everything themselves; and surely, if the wives of our rulers under the old (or even the new) régime had been capable of making draughts of letters, official despatches, or proclamations, it would have been better to employ their time in this manner than in soliciting and intriguing for all sorts of people: the one excludes the other by the very nature of things.

If those who knew me had judged properly in respect to facts, they would have prevented me from suffering a sort of celebrity which I never envied; instead of now spending my time in refuting falsehood, I should be reading a chapter of Montaigne, painting a flower, or playing an *ariette*, and thus beguiling the solitude of my prison, without sitting down to write my confession.

But I now anticipate a period which I had not as yet attained. I make my remarks equally without constraint, and without scruple; since

it is myself that is to be described, it is necessary that I should be seen with all my irregularities. I do not lead my pen, it carries me along with it wherever it pleases, and I give it the rein.

My father honestly endeavored for some time after he became a widower, to remain more at home than hitherto; but he became weary of this, and when the love of his profession did not get the better of his failing, all my efforts could not cure it. I wished to converse with him, but we had few ideas in common; and he then probably hankered after a mode of life which he did not wish that I should be acquainted with. I often sat down to piquet with him. It was not perhaps very amusing for him to play with his own daughter; besides he was not ignorant that I detested cards, and however desirous I might be to persuade him that I took pleasure in them, and however honestly I tried for his sake to do so, he entertained no doubt that it was all mere complaisance on my part.

I could have wished to render his house agreeable to him, but the means were not in my power, as I had no other acquaintance than my old relations whom I visited, and who never put

themselves out of their usual way. He might have formed a little society at home, but he had become accustomed to one of another sort elsewhere, and he well knew that it would not have been proper to introduce me there. Was my mother really in the wrong to live a life so secluded, and not to make her house gay enough to be attractive to her husband? This would be blaming her too readily; but it would also be unjust to consider my father as entirely to blame for his failings. There is such a connection between the evils which flow necessarily from a first cause, that it is proper always to ascend to the source for an explanation.

Our legislators of the present day aim to attain a general good, whence is to spring the happiness of individuals; I am much afraid this is like putting the cart before the horse. It would be more conformable with nature, and perhaps with reason, to study well what constitutes domestic happiness, to insure it to individuals in such a manner that the common felicity shall be composed of that of each citizen, and that all shall be interested in conserving the order of things which has procured them this. However charming the written

principles of a constitution may be, if I behold a portion of those who have adopted it in grief and tears, I must believe it to be no other than a political monster; if those who do not weep rejoice in the sufferings of the rest, I shall say that it is atrocious, and that its authors are either weak or wicked men.

In a marriage where the parties are ill mated, the virtue of one of them may maintain order and peace, but the want of happiness will be experienced sooner or later, and produce inconveniencies more or less hurtful. The scaffolding of these unions resembles the system of our politicians; the bases are rotten, and the whole will some day give way, in spite of the art employed in its construction.

My mother could not collect around her any others than such as resembled herself, and these would not have suited my father; on the other hand, those whom he would have liked to have constantly about him would not only have been disagreeable to my mother, but incompatible with the manner in which she wished to educate me. She therefore necessarily confined herself to her own family, and cultivated only those superficial connections

which produce an acquaintance without creating an intimacy.

Everything went well while my father, with a good business and a young wife, found in his own home all the employment and pleasure which he could desire. But he was a year younger than my mother; she began early in life to experience infirmities; some circumstances slackened his ardor for labor; the desire of getting rich made him embark in a few hazardous enterprises: thenceforward all was lost. The love of labor forms the virtue of man in a state of society; it is essentially that of the individual who does not possess a cultivated mind. The moment that this desire languishes, danger is at hand; if it be extinguished, he becomes a prey to the passions, which are always more fatal when there is less employment, because then there is also less restraint.

Become a widower at the very moment when he stood in need of new ties to confine him at home, my poor father kept a mistress, that he might not present his daughter with a stepmother; he had recourse to play, to indemnify himself for his loss of employment; and, with-

out ceasing to be an honest man, sank gradually and insensibly to ruin.

My relations, worthy and unsuspicious people, confiding in my father's attachment to me, had not demanded an inventory of the estate after the death of his wife; my interests appeared to be safely confided to his guardianship; they would have imagined that they had wronged him had they done otherwise. I was placed in a situation that enabled me to surmise the contrary; but as I would have deemed it indecent to reveal what I knew on this subject, I remained silent and resigned. Behold me then alone in the house, my time divided between my housework and my studies, which I sometimes abandoned in order to answer people who were vexed at not finding my father at home. Two apprentices, one of whom lived in the house, were now sufficient for the work of the shop.

My servant was a little woman of fifty-five, thin, alert, sprightly, and gay, who loved me exceedingly because I made life pleasant for her. She always attended me when I went out without my father, but my walks never extended beyond the house of my grandparents

and the church. I had not again grown devout; but what I no longer practised out of regard to the scruples of my mother, I continued from a sense of duty to the good order of society and the edification of my neighbor. In obedience to this principle, I carried with me to church, if not the ardent piety of former years, at least enough of decorum and a spirit of meditation. I no longer accompanied the ordinary of the mass; I read some Christian work. For Saint Augustine I have always had much liking — and assuredly there are fathers of the church whom one may peruse without being devout, for there is food enough in them both for the heart and the mind.

I wished to go through a course of reading of the preachers, the living as well as the dead. The eloquence of the pulpit is of a sort to enable the gift of oratory to unfold itself with splendor. I had already read Bossuet and Fléchier; I was glad to review them now with a maturer eye, and I became familiar with Bourdaloue and Massillon; nothing could be more diverting than to see their names entered in my little memorandum book with those of De Pauw, Raynal, and the author of "The Sys-

tem of Nature;" but what is still more so, is, that in consequence of reading sermons, I was seized with the desire of composing one. I was vexed that the preachers always recurred to mysteries; it seemed to me that they ought to have drawn up moral discourses, in which the devil and the incarnation were never mentioned. I accordingly seized my pen, to try my own hand at the business, and wrote a sermon on the *love of one's neighbor*. I amused my little uncle with it; he was become a canon of Vincennes, and said it was wrong in me not to have undertaken this sooner and at a time when he himself was obliged to compose discourses, as in that case he would have preached mine.

I had often heard the logic of Bourdaloue much vaunted; I dared in some measure to differ from his admirers, and actually drew up a criticism on one of his most esteemed discourses; but I never showed it to any one. I love to render an account to myself of my own opinions, but I do not choose to submit them to the eye of another. Massillon, less lofty than Bourdaloue, and far more affecting, won my esteem. I was not then acquainted with the

Protestant orators, among whom Blair, more especially, has cultivated with equal simplicity and elegance that species of composition, whose existence I readily conceived, and which I could have wished to see adopted.

Among the preachers of that day, I have heard the Abbé l'Enfant, toward the close of his brilliant career; polish and reason appeared to me to characterize him. Father Élisée was already out of fashion, notwithstanding his close reasoning and chaste diction: his mind was too metaphysical and his delivery too simple to please the vulgar.

Paris was a singular place in those times; this rendezvous of all the impurities of the kingdom, was also the focus of taste and knowledge: preacher or comedian, professor or mountebank, in short whoever possessed abilities, was followed in his turn; but the first mind in the world would not have long fixed the public attention, for which novelty was always necessary, and this was effected by noise as well as by merit.

A certain person leaving the famous order of the Jesuits, becoming a missionary, and pretending to exhibit himself at court, was

enabled by that means to attract notice and procure a number of followers. I also went to hear this Abbé de Beauregard; he was a little man, with a powerful voice, and declaimed with wonderful impudence and extraordinary violence. He retailed commonplaces with the air of inspiration, and he supported these by such terrible gesticulations, that he persuaded a great number of people they were very fine. I did not then know so well as now that men assembled together in great numbers possess ears rather than judgment; that to astonish is to lead them, and that whoever assumes the authority of commanding, disposes them to obey. I could not find utterance for my astonishment at the success of this personage, who was either a great fanatic, or a great rogue, and perhaps both.

I had not sufficiently analyzed the accounts of the orators of the ancient republics; else I should have been better able to judge respecting the means of affecting the passions of the people. But I shall never forget a vulgar man planted directly opposite the pulpit in which Beauregard was displaying his antics, with his eyes fixed on the orator, his mouth open, and

involuntarily allowing to escape the expression of his stupid admiration in the three following words, which I well recollect: "How he sweats!" Behold then the means of imposing upon fools! How much reason had Phocion, surprised at finding himself applauded in an assembly of the people, to demand of his friends whether he had not uttered something foolish!

This same M. de Beauregard would have made a fierce *clubbist;* and how many of the members of the popular societies, in their enthusiasm over brazen-faced babblers, have recalled to my memory the expression made use of by the man just spoken of, "How he sweats!"

My illness had created some talk; it would appear that people deemed it either very uncommon, or very charming, that a young girl should be in danger of losing her life through mere sorrow at the death of her mother. I received many marks of regard on this account, which were extremely agreeable to me. M. de Boismorel was one of the first who bestowed them; I had not seen him since his visits at my grandmother's. I perceived the impression

which the change that had taken place in my person since that period, produced upon him. He returned during my absence, conversed a long time with my father, who doubtless spoke to him about my studies, and showed him the little apartment in which I passed my time. They looked at my books; my *works* were upon the table; these excited his curiosity, and my father took upon himself to gratify it, by showing them to him.

Great displeasure and complaints ensued on my part, when I found on my return that they had violated my asylum. My father pretended that he would not have complied with the wishes of any person less grave and less worthy of consideration than M. de Boismorel. His reasons did not make me relish his proceedings, as it was an offence against liberty and property; it was disposing, without my consent, of what I alone possessed the right of conferring; but, at all events, the harm was done. Next day I received a well-written letter from M. de Boismorel, couched in too flattering terms not to procure his pardon for having profited by the indiscretion of my father, and offering me access to his library. I did not read this

proposal with indifference: from that moment a correspondence began between us; I tasted for the first time those agreeable sensations which sensibility and self-love make us experience when we find ourselves esteemed by those whose judgment we value.

M. de Boismorel no longer resided at Paris; his partiality for the country, and his wish not to remove his mother to too great a distance from the capital, had made him purchase the "*Petit-Bercy*," below Charenton, a charming house, the garden of which extended to the banks of the Seine. He pressed us much to take a walk thither, testifying at the same time, the greatest eagerness to receive us. I recollected the reception given us by his mother upon a former occasion, and was not in the least tempted to renew that experience; so I resisted the entreaties of my father. He insisted; and, as I would not oppose the little trips which he sometimes liked to make with me, we one day set out for Bercy. The ladies of the family of Boismorel were sitting in the summer *salon;* the presence of the daughter-in-law, whose amiable disposition I had heard much talk of, immediately put me at my ease. The mother,

whose manner may be recollected, and whom years had not rendered more humble, evinced however more politeness toward a young person who had the appearance of respecting herself, than she had formerly shown to a child whom she deemed of no consequence.

"How well your dear daughter looks, M. Phlipon! But do you know that my son is enchanted with her? Tell me, mademoiselle, do you not wish to be married?"

"Others have already thought for me on that subject, madame, but I have not as yet seen reason to come to any determination."

"You are hard to please, I suppose! Have you any repugnance to a man of a certain age?"

"The knowledge I might have of a person would alone determine my attachment, my refusal, or my acceptation."

"Those kinds of marriages have most solidity; a young man often escapes through our fingers, when one thinks him most attached."

"And why, mother," said M. de Boismorel, who just entered, "should not mademoiselle believe herself able to captivate such a person entirely?"

"She is dressed with taste," observed Madame de Boismorel to her daughter-in-law.

"Ah! extremely well, and so modestly too," replied the young woman, with all that suavity which appertains only to devotees, for she belonged to that class; and the little curls shading an agreeable face that had seen thirty-four summers, were disposed with due primness.

"How different," added she, "from that ridiculous mass of plumage we see fluttering above empty heads! You do not love feathers, mademoiselle?"

"I never wear them, madame, because, being the daughter of an artist, they would seem to announce a situation and fortune to which I do not pretend."

"But would you wear them were you in another situation?"

"I do not know; I attach but little importance to such trifles; in regard to myself, I estimate those matters by convenience alone, and I take good care not to judge a person by my first impressions of her toilette."

The observation was severe; but I pronounced it so mildly that the edge was blunted.

"A philosopher!" exclaims she, with a sigh,

as if she had recollected that I did not belong to her sect.

After a nice examination of my person, seasoned with compliments similar to those I have related, M. de Boismorel put an end to the inventory by proposing that we should visit his garden and library. I admired the situation of the first, in which he made me remark a noble cedar of Lebanon; I glanced at the other with delight, and I pointed out the works, and even collections which I begged him to lend me, such as Bayle among others, and the "Memoirs of the Academies."

The ladies invited us to dinner on a day fixed by them for that purpose; we repaired thither accordingly, and I soon judged, by the two or three men of business who were our fellow-guests, that they had suited the company to my father, without considering me. But M. de Boismorel had recourse as before to his library and the garden, where we conversed together. He had caused his son to form one of the party; he was a young man of seventeen, ugly enough, and more eccentric than amiable. The company that arrived in the evening, and which I examined with an observing eye, did not appear

to me to be very attractive, notwithstanding its titles; the daughters of a marquis, some counsellors, a prior and a few old baronesses, talked with more importance, but to the full as insipidly as nuns, churchwardens, and tradesmen. Those points of view in which I consider the world, and examine it unperceived by any one, disgust me with it, and attach me still more to my own manner of living.

M. de Boismorel did not let slip this opportunity to form a connection, on which perhaps he founded some project; he accordingly so ordered matters that the two fathers and the two children formed a select party.

It was in this manner also, that he accompanied me to the public meeting of the French Academy, on the succeeding anniversary of St. Louis. Those meetings were at that time the rendezvous of good company, and they exhibited all the contrasts which our manners and our follies could not fail to produce. On the morning of St. Louis's day, they celebrated a mass in the chapel of the Academy, at which the singers of the Opera assisted, and at the conclusion a favorite orator of the *beau monde* delivered a panegyric on the Saint-King.

The Abbé de Besplas was pitched upon for this function. I listened to him with great pleasure, notwithstanding the triviality and staleness of his theme; he mingled with his discourse certain bold philosophical touches and indirect satires on the government, which he was obliged to alter when he printed his speech.

M. de Boismorel, who was intimate with him, endeavored in vain to obtain a faithful copy, which he would have communicated to me; the Abbé de Besplas, attached to the court as chaplain to Monsieur, was exceedingly fortunate to procure pardon for his boldness, by the absolute sacrifice of the offensive remarks. The evening session of the Academy opened a career to the first-rate wits in the kingdom, to the grandees who wished to enter their names on that list, and exhibit themselves in such a conspicuous station to the eyes of the public; in fine, to the amateurs who went to hear one class, to see another, and to show themselves to all; and to the handsome women, who were sure of their share of attention.

I noticed especially d'Alembert, whose name, and whose "Miscellanies" and "Discourses concerning the Encyclopedia," had excited my curi-

osity. His insignificant figure and shrill voice made me think that it was better to be acquainted with the writings of a philosopher than his person. The Abbé de Lille confirmed this observation, in respect to men of letters; he read some charming verses in a very clumsy manner. The eulogy on Catinat by La Harpe gained the prize, and it well deserved it.

As free from affectation at the Academy as in the church, and as I have since then been when at the play, I did not mingle in the noisy plaudits conferred on the striking passages, for these were often meant only to evince the fine taste and discrimination of those who bestowed them. I was extremely attentive; I listened without noticing those around me; and when I was affected I wept, without caring whether it appeared singular to any one. I however had occasion to perceive that this was the case; for, as M. de Boismorel conducted me to the door, I noticed certain persons pointing me out to one another with a smile, which I was not vain enough to imagine proceeded from admiration, but which had nothing uncivil in it; and I heard them comment upon my sensibility. I experienced a certain mixture of surprise and

agreeable confusion; and was at length happy to escape from the crowd and their attention.

The eulogy of Catinat suggested to M. de Boismorel an interesting pilgrimage; he proposed to me a visit to St. Gratien, where this great man had ended his days in retirement, at a distance from the court and its honors; it was a philosophical walk, perfectly suited to my taste. M. de Boismorel, accompanied by his son, accordingly came on Michaelmas-day to take my father and me along with him. We repaired to the valley of Montmorency, and visited the borders of the lake that embellishes it; we then ascended to St. Gratien, and reposed under the shade of those trees which Catinat had planted with his own hand. After a frugal dinner we spent the remainder of the day in the delicious park of Montmorency; we saw the cottage which Jean Jacques Rousseau had inhabited, and we enjoyed all the pleasure which a charming country affords, more especially when there are several that contemplate it with equal admiration. During one of those pauses given to silent contemplation of the majesty of nature, M. de Boismorel took from his pocket a manuscript, written with his own hand, and read a

passage to us, of which he had made an extract, and which was then but little known. It was that anecdote of Montesquieu, who, on being discovered at Marseilles by the young man whose father he had rescued, concealed himself in order to avoid the thanks of those whom he had befriended. Although touched by Montesquieu's magnanimity, I still cannot altogether approve his persistence in denying that he was the benefactor of this enraptured family. The generous man, it is true, never asks for gratitude; but if it is becoming to avoid its manifestations, is there not, too, something fine in permitting the expression of it? I even think it is rendering a new service to people of sensibility whom we have obliged, since it affords them a certain means of discharging the debt.

It must not be supposed that I was altogether at my ease in regard to this connection between my father and M. de Boismorel; there was no personal equality between them, and of this I was too painfully aware. His son regarded me closely, but this did not please me, for I saw in it more of curiosity than of interest; besides, his comparative youth (he was three or four years my junior) placed him at a certain dis-

advantage. His father did not fail to note this; and I learned later that he had one day said to mine, shaking him by the hand, "Ah, if my son were worthy of your daughter, I might appear singular, but I should be too happy."

I did not entertain any idea of this kind; I did not even calculate the disparity; I felt it, however, and that prevented me from making any suppositions. I judged the conduct of M. de Boismorel to be that of a man of sense and sensibility, who honored my sex, esteemed my person, and, as it were, protected my taste. His letters resembled himself: they were characterized by an agreeable gravity, bore the stamp of a mind superior to prejudices, and of a respectful friendship.

I became acquainted through him with what are termed the *novelties* in the learned and literary world. I saw him but seldom, though I heard from him every week; and, to spare the servants the long trips to and from Bercy, he used to send the books he selected for me to his sister's, Madame de Favière's. M. de Boismorel, who was greatly attached to letters, and who, consequently, imagined that I ought to be employed in that field, or perhaps with a design

to sound me, invited me to choose a subject, and try my talents at composition. I at first considered this as a mere compliment; but, on his returning to the charge, he afforded me an opportunity of stating my views in this regard, — my determined dislike of publicity, and my disinterested attachment to study, which I wished to render serviceable to my happiness, without the intervention of any kind of glory, which appeared to me only calculated to trouble it. After having set forth my principles, I mingled with my arguments extemporary verses, the ideas of which were better than the expression. I recollect, that while speaking of the gods, and of the dispensations made by them of benefits and duties, I said: —

Aux hommes ouvrant la carrière
Des grands et des nobles talents,
Ils n'ont mis aucune barrière
A leurs plus sublimes élans.
De mon sexe faible et sensible,
Ils ne veulent que des vertus;
Nous pouvons imiter Titus,
Mais dans un sentier moins pénible.
Jouissez du bien d'être admis
A toutes ces sortes de gloire;
Pour nous le temple de Mémoire
Est dans le cœur de nos amis.

BRISSOT

M. de Boismorel answered me sometimes in the same style. His verses were not much better than my own; but neither of us attached great importance to them.

He called one day to tell me that he was desirous to employ a stratagem to stimulate the industry of his son, whose application to his studies had sadly fallen off. This youth had, very naturally, formed an intimacy with his cousin de Favières, a young man of twenty-one and a counsellor of the parliament, wild, as young men of his years are apt to be, and filled with the conceit of a magistrate who plumes himself on his office without realizing its obligations.

The Italian comedy or the opera occupied the attention of the two cousins much more than Cujas and Bartole did the one, or the mathematics, which he had just begun to study, the other.

"It is necessary," said M. de Boismorel to me, that "you should reprove my son in a letter replete with wisdom and penetration: in short, in such a manner as your own mind will dictate; and in a way to stimulate his self-love, and awaken generous resolutions."

"I, monsieur! I?" (I could not believe my own ears.) "And in what manner, pray, shall I be able to preach to your son?"

"In any manner you please; you shall not appear in the business; we shall contrive to make the letter appear to be from some one who narrowly examines his conduct, is acquainted with his proceedings, is interested in his behalf, and who thus warns him of his danger. I know how to get the letter conveyed to him at a moment when it will produce its full effect. It is only necessary that he should not discover me; and I shall inform him at a proper opportunity to what physician he is indebted."

"Oh! you must never mention my name! — But you have other friends who can do this better than I can."

"I think otherwise; and I beg this favor of you."

"Very well, I renounce every other consideration on purpose to prove my desire of obliging you. I shall accordingly transmit you the rough draught of a letter, which you shall give me your opinion of, and correct."

That very evening I wrote a pretty sharp and

somewhat ironical epistle, such as I deemed proper to tickle the self-love and excite the reason of a young man to whom it is necessary to talk of his happiness when one wishes to convert him to serious habits. M. de Boismorel was enchanted with it, and begged me to forward it without altering a word. Accordingly I enclosed it in a note to Sophie, so that she might post it at Amiens; and I waited with some curiosity to learn what my sermon might result in.

M. de Boismorel soon sent me certain particulars respecting which I was exceedingly interested. He had prepared a great many circumstances in order to make a greater impression. The young man was affected: he supposed the celebrated Duclos to be the author of this remonstrance, and he went to thank him. Deceived in this conjecture, he addressed himself to another of his father's friends, and guessed no better. At length his studies were in some measure resumed.

It was not very long after this, when M. de Boismorel, walking with his son one very hot day from Bercy to Vincennes, where he knew I then was with my uncle, and whither he

brought me the Abbé Delille's translation of the Georgics, suffered a sunstroke. He treated it lightly; headaches and a fever ensued, and then coma; in short, he died in the vigor of his age, after a few days' illness. It was scarcely more than eighteen months that we had corresponded together, yet I wept more bitterly, I believe, at his death than his own son; and I never recollect him without experiencing that mournful regret, that sentiment of veneration and tenderness, which always accompanies the remembrance of a good man.

When my sorrow was somewhat softened, I celebrated his memory in a monody, which no one has ever seen, but which I sang to the accompaniment of my guitar, and which I have now lost and forgotten. I have never since heard anything about his family, save that when my father went to pay a visit of condolence, young Boismorel, who is called Roberge, observed carelessly that he had found my letters to his father, and had put them aside in order to return them to me, if desired; and that among them he had discovered the original of a certain epistle he himself had been favored with. My father knew very well what

he alluded to. He said but little in reply, finding that the young man appeared to be piqued: whence I concluded that he was a fool, and troubled myself no more about him. I do not know whether I guessed right or not.

Some time before this, Madame de Favières called upon my father, about the purchase either of trinkets or some other productions of his art. I was in my little study, and heard her in the adjoining apartment.

"You have a charming daughter, M. Phlipon; my brother says that he knows no woman of sense who is more so: take care at least that she do not become a female wit, for that would be detestable. Is she not a little pedantic? This is to be dreaded; for I think I heard something of that kind. She has a good figure and a pretty face."

"This is," said I, in my corner, "an impertinent lady, who resembles her mother exceedingly. God keep me from seeing her face, or exhibiting mine to her!"

My father, who knew very well that I must have heard her, refrained from calling me, since I did not appear; and I never heard the voice of Madame de Favières after that day.

I have as yet said but a few words about my excellent cousin Trude. She was one of those women whom heaven in its goodness forms for the honor of the species and the consolation of the unfortunate: generous from impulse, amiable without effort, I discovered no fault in her save an excess of scrupulosity and the *amour-propre* of virtue. She would have deemed herself remiss in her duty, had she acted in such a way as to give rise to a doubt whether she had fulfilled it. Thus constituted, she remained to the last the victim of the most silly of husbands. Trude was a kind of rustic, as foolish in his ideas as hasty in his temper and coarse in his habits. He dealt in looking-glasses, as all the Trudes, from father to son, for some generations, had done; and it was he whom I had the honor to have for cousin by my mother's side. Active from temperament, laborious by fits, aided by the cares and the knowledge of a mild and sensible woman, he was fairly prosperous, and owed it to the merit of his wife that he was well received by his own family, who would not have taken any notice of him had he been single.

My mother was greatly attached to her

cousin, who revered her in return, and became very fond of me.

She demonstrated this, as has been already said, on the death of my mother. Occupied during the day with her household affairs and her husband, she insisted on being my nurse at night, coming a great distance to fulfil the functions of one as long as I was in danger. This circumstance necessarily connected us still more firmly together, and we saw each other frequently.

Her husband took it into his head to visit me still oftener than before, and without his wife. I tolerated this at first on her account, notwithstanding my being weary of his company. He became insupportable to me; and I made use of all the discretion possible with a wrongheaded man, on purpose to make him perceive that his claims as my relation, and the husband of my dear friend, were not sufficient to authorize his frequent calls, which could no longer be attributed to the sufferings and illness proceeding from my grief.

My dear cousin came a little less often, but he spun out his visit to two or three hours, although I could do anything, and even write, by

observing to him that I was in a great hurry; but when I invited him in a decisive tone to retire, as it was at length necessary to speak plainly, he went home in such a bad humor, and treated his wife so harshly, that she besought me to have patience, for her sake. It was more especially on Sundays and festivals that I was subjected to this tax: when the weather was fine I made my escape, and met his wife at the house of my aged relations; for to receive her at home, at the same time as him, was not to see her, but to witness the disagreeable scenes which her cross-grained husband never failed to make her experience.

During the winter I adopted another plan. Immediately after dinner I gave the key to my maid, who double-locked and triple-bolted the door; in this situation I remained alone and in perfect tranquillity until eight o'clock at night. Trude in the mean time would arrive, and not finding any one at home, would retreat. Sometimes he would walk for a couple of hours in the neighborhood, amidst rain or snow, to wait for an opportunity to enter. To conceal myself when I was in company with any one was almost impossible: absolutely to deny him en-

trance, by determining my father to break with him (which would have been difficult, because he had no children, and my father therefore thought proper to keep on good terms with him), would have been to proceed to that extremity which his wife dreaded, would have dissolved our connection and exposed her to new afflictions.

I do not know anything worse than to have to deal with a fool: there is no other mode to be taken with him but to bind him, for everything else is useless. This loutish cousin was a real plague to me, and it was the greatest proof of my esteem for his wife, that I refrained from throwing him out of the window — in which case he would have re-entered by the garret. Trude, however, was not destitute of a certain kind of politeness: witless rather than brutal, he knew how far he could carry his extravagance with impunity; for never was his coarse conversation indecent; and, although constantly at variance with good sense and good manners, he was never improper.

Whenever his wife came to walk with me, he would watch us narrowly; and if a man happened to accost us or to bow to us he could

not rest until he had ascertained who it was. It may be supposed it was his wife he was jealous of, and to a certain extent this was true; but he was much more so on my account. In spite of the absurdities of the situation Madame Trude's submissiveness was accompanied by gayety; she would weep one day, and entertain her friends the next; once or twice in the winter these little gatherings would be enlivened with a dance. Her cousin was always the heroine of these occasions, and her husband would appear more amiable for some days afterwards. I met at her house two persons whom I shall here mention; the one was the Abbé Bexon, a little, witty, hunchbacked man, a great friend of François de Neufchâteau, and Masson de Morvilliers. He was author of a history of Lorraine, which did not prove very successful; and his pen, like that of many others, had been employed by Buffon to prepare materials and sketches, to which he afterwards gave the finishing touches and the coloring. Bexon, supported by his protector Buffon, some ladies of quality whose relations he had known at Riremont (the place of his nativity), and a chapter of noble canonesses, became precentor

of the Sainte Chapelle at Paris. He took with him his mother and sister, who would furnish materials for an episode, had I inclination to enter into any detail not necessarily connected with the subject.

The poor creature died too soon for the welfare of his tall sister, with her black eyes begging for adorers, and her beautiful shoulders, which she loved to display. He visited me twice at my father's, and was so transported to find Xenophon *in folio* on my table, that he wished to embrace me in his ecstasy. As this was not at all agreeable to me, I calmed him so completely by my coolness, that he was content to display his wit without his transports; and I never saw him afterwards but at my cousin's.

The other visitor was honest Gibert. Grave in his morals, mild in his manners, married while young to a woman who possessed more physical charms than sweetness, he had an only son by her, whose education occupied his attention. He was employed in the post-office, and consecrated a few leisure moments to music and painting.

Gibert possessed all the characteristics of a just and good man; he has never altered. His

faults proceed from lack of judgment; friendship with him is a species of fanaticism, and one is tempted to respect his errors even while complaining of them. Gibert had been connected from his infancy with a man for whom he professed as much veneration as attachment; he vaunted his merit upon every occasion, and he gloried in being his friend. He was desirous of becoming acquainted with me; his wife and he called at my father's, and I returned the visit; and as they did not often go out together, he came by himself from time to time. I always received him with pleasure and distinction, and in course of time we became friends. It was not long before Gibert talked to me of his Phœnix; he appeared as if he could not be happy until his friends should admire each other; at length, he brought us together at his house.

I beheld a man whose excessive simplicity bordered upon negligence; speaking but little, and not fixing the attention of any one, it would have been difficult for a person who had never heard of him before to form a proper judgment upon a first interview; and I avow, notwithstanding my liking for a modest deport-

ment, that of this man was so humble that I would have readily taken any one's word for it. However, as he was neither deficient in judgment nor attainments, one had a greater desire to be pleased when he chose to exhibit them, and ended like Gibert in giving him credit for more than he actually possessed. His wife, a somewhat commonplace woman, but not devoid of sense, always reminded me of the *intentique ora tenebant* of Virgil, when she heard her husband speak? He is not, however, altogether an ordinary being, who knows how to impose thus even upon those who are familiar with him, as to the extent of his real merit. It is necessary that he should be great in something, at least in dissimulation; and if he were interested by circumstances to push this as far as possible in important affairs, from being a pretended sage who usurps our esteem he might finally become a ruffian at the expense of his contemporaries. History will enable us to judge of this hereafter. I saw but little of Gibert's friend; he abandoned a lucrative place, and even France, to live in Switzerland, whither he was carried by his passion for a rural life and for liberty. Let him go; he

will return but too soon. It was thus that I became acquainted with Pache;[1] for I may now say that it is of him that I speak. It will be seen how Gibert brought him to my house more than ten years afterwards, and introduced him to my husband, who deemed him a man of uncommon probity. He announced him as such at a time when his suffrage could confer reputation; and he procured his entrance into the administration, where he committed a series of blunders which procured his appointment to the mayoralty; and there he sanctioned those horrors of which the world now knows.

Madame Trude earnestly desired to take a journey to visit a relation whom she was fond of; this meant an absence of a fortnight or three weeks. Her husband deemed it inconvenient that the shop should be so long deprived of his representative; however, her plan seemed practicable, provided I consented to go there sometimes, to occupy her place. My cousin asked me to do so; to express such a wish, was enough to make me think that I could not

[1] Pache, later the Jacobin Mayor of Paris, who, on October 20, 1792, succeeded Servan as Minister of War.

refuse; and my friendship for her induced me to comply without hesitation.

I accordingly repaired thither seven or eight times, and stayed from noon until six o'clock in the evening, in order to take Madame Trude's place at the counter. Her husband, joyful and proud, conducted himself admirably, attended to his business outside, and appeared to be sensible of the merit of my conduct. It was thus decreed that in the course of my life, notwithstanding my aversion to trade, I should at least sell spectacles, and watch-glasses. The situation was not pleasant; Trude resided in the *rue Montmartre*, not far from the *rue Tiquetonne*, where his successor still lives. I am incapable of imagining anything so infernal as the noise which the carriages eternally rolling about in that neighborhood occasioned, in a shop entirely open; I should have become deaf, as my poor cousin is at this day.

Let us leave her unhappy house, of which we shall see the fate, and return to my other relation.

I visited Mademoiselle Desportes once or twice every week, on the day when she received company. I should have many portraits to paint

were the originals worth the trouble; but were I to portray a few counsellors of the Châtelet, such as little Mopinot, pretending to an epigrammatic kind of wit; the devout la Presle, a good man, who had no other fault than that of being bilious and a Jansenist; a dowager who veiled her love of pleasure under an easy piety, such as Madame de Blancfuné; an old and rich bachelor, too disgusting to be named; a spruce kind of person, reasoning and regulated like a clock, such as the placeman Baudin; and a crowd of other individuals of varying humors and little merit, I should throw away both my colors and my time. I loved, however, to meet Father Rabbe, a very shrewd member of the oratory, respectable from his age, amiable from the politeness of his conversation; and Doctor Coste, a physician of Provence, who amused himself in imitating Perrault, without erecting a Louvre, and who spoke ill of marriage, much as the devil is said to make a wry face at the sight of holy water.

Mademoiselle Desportes had inherited from her mother pride and tact, the art of mending her small fortune through commerce without appearing to be engaged in it, and of treating

on a footing of confidence and equality with her rich and titled customers. But this mode of dealing consorts ill with the spirit of trade, which thrives by an active cupidity; so she soon saw her inheritance diminishing, and she ended by giving up the business and cutting down her expenses.

Her character and manners and her evident attachment to me made my mother wish me to cultivate her acquaintance, and I often went to her house. Piquet, gossip, and needlework occupied the little circle that gathered there; and Mademoiselle Desportes often made me take my seat at the card-table — as a discipline, I suppose, in complaisance, for she knew the amusement was not much to my taste. The assistance of my partner and the permission to laugh over my own absent-mindedness, made the exercise less tedious.

I must now bring upon the stage in his turn an old gentleman then just come from Pondicherry whom I saw often and with pleasure during nearly a year. My father had become acquainted, I know not how, but I suppose in the way of business, with a half-pay officer, later a civil servant out of employment, named

Demontchery. He was a man of thirty-six, with polished manners and a winning air — with those graces, in fine, which a knowledge of the world confers, and which form perhaps the flower of gallantry. Demontchery cultivated my father's friendship, without paying court to my mother, who might not have approved of his advances. He frankly declared his regard for me, and his ambition of soliciting my hand, if fortune ceased to prove adverse to him. She sent him straight to the East Indies, whence he wrote to us and did not conceal his wishes for that degree of success which would permit him to return with a competence. But being only a simple captain of Sepoys, and too honest a man to think of acquiring anything, he was not, I suppose, very far advanced in this pursuit, when he came home after seven years' absence, and, hastening to my father's, learned that I had been married a fortnight. I know not what has become of him, or what he might have inspired me with, had I thought of him. During his residence at Pondicherry, he formed an acquaintance with a M. de Sainte-Lette, one of the members of the council, and intrusted him with letters to my father, when the council

deputed Sainte-Lette to Paris, in 1776, on some important business.

Sainte-Lette was more than sixty years of age; he was a man whose vivacity and unruly passions had led him astray in his youth, during which he dissipated his fortune at Paris. He had gone to America, and remained thirteen years in Louisiana as superintendent of the trade with the savages; thence he drifted to Asia, and found employment in the administration at Pondicherry, where he endeavored to acquire the means of living one day in France, along with the friend of his youth, M. de Sévelinges, of whom I shall hereafter make mention. A grave and solemn voice, distinguished by that tone which experience and misfortune confer, and sustained by the ready expression of a well-informed mind, struck me at the first interview with Sainte-Lette. Demontchery had spoken to him about me; it was this probably that inspired him with the desire of forming my acquaintance. My father received him graciously, and I with eagerness, because I soon became much interested in his favor; his society was exceedingly agreeable, he sought after mine, and during the whole of his stay he

never let four or five days pass without visiting me.

Those who have seen much are always worth hearing; and those who have felt much have always seen more than others, even if they have travelled less than Sainte-Lette. He possessed that kind of knowledge conferred far better by experience than books; less learned than philosophical, he reasoned from the human heart; he had retained from his youth a taste for the lighter kinds of poetry, and had composed some pretty verses. He presented me with several of these performances; I communicated some of my reveries to him, and he repeated to me several times with a prophetical tone, that is to say, with a full persuasion of the event: "Mademoiselle, you are in the right to be on your guard, for all this will end in your writing a book!"

"It shall then be under another person's name," I replied, "for I will eat my fingers sooner than become an author."

Sainte-Lette met a person[1] at my father's whom I had then been acquainted with during several months, and who was destined to

[1] Roland now enters upon the scene.

ROLAND DE LA PLATIÈRE

have a powerful influence on my lot, although I scarcely foresaw it at that period. I have already observed that Sophie, though more accustomed than myself to mingle in society, was far from discovering any advantage in this circumstance. She had sometimes spoken to me of a man of merit who occasionally resided at Amiens, and who often visited at her mother's while there, which, however, was not very often, because he came to Paris in the winter, and often made still longer journeys in the spring. She had mentioned him to me, because, amidst the insignificant crowd with which she was surrounded, she distinguished with pleasure an individual whose instructive conversation appeared to her full of novelty, whose austere but unaffected manners inspired confidence, and who, without being generally beloved (for his severity, which sometimes approached harshness, was repellent to many), was nevertheless universally respected. To him, it seems, Sophie had already spoken of her friend; there was much talk, too, in her family of the constancy of a certain girlish attachment formed in the convent; finally, he had seen my portrait, which Madame Cannet introduced in evidence.

"Why, then," he used to say, "do you not make me acquainted with this dear friend? I go to Paris every year. Why not entrust me with a letter for her?"

He obtained the desired commission in September, 1775. I was then still in mourning for my mother, and in that melancholy and sensitive mood that succeeds violent grief. A messenger from my Sophie could not fail to be well received.

"This letter will be delivered," wrote my friend, by the philosopher of whom I have spoken, M. Roland de la Platière, an enlightened man of pure morals, who can be reproached with nothing save his preference of the ancients over the moderns (whom he despises) and his foible of being somewhat overfond of talking of himself." This sketch was just and well-drawn, as far as it went.

I saw in our visitor a man past forty, of a negligent air and that sort of stiffness that comes of studious habits; but his address was easy and direct, and though it lacked the polish of the world, it joined the air of good birth to the dignity of the philosopher. A face somewhat lean and sallow, a broad brow already but

sparsely furnished with hair, regular features, made up an *ensemble* that was imposing rather than seductive. When Roland became animated in conversation, or when he was inspired by a specially agreeable idea, his subtle smile and animated face made him appear quite another person. His voice was manly, and he spoke in short sentences, like one whose respiration is labored; his discourse was full of matter, and exercised the judgment more than it flattered the ear; his speech was piquant at times, but harsh and inharmonious in delivery. In my opinion, the charms of the voice possess a rare but powerful effect over the senses; this does not alone appertain to the quality of the sound; it results still more from that delicacy of sentiment which varies the expression and modifies the accent.

[*They interrupt, to inform me that I am comprehended in Brissot's act of accusation,*[1] *along with many other deputies recently arrested. The tyrants are at bay; they think to fill up the pit open before them, by precipitating worthy people*

[1] Madame Roland was not, in fact, comprehended in this document, but she was summoned as a witness. Her testimony, however, was not taken, the enemies of the Gironde doubtless dreading the appearance before the Tribunal of so dauntless and outspoken an advocate.

into it; but they themselves will fall in afterwards. I do not dread going to the scaffold in such good company; it is disgraceful to live in the midst of ruffians. I shall send away this section of my memoir, and prepare to proceed on another, if I am permitted.

Friday, October 4, the birthday of my daughter, who on this day is twelve years of age.]

This subtle charm of the voice, entirely distinct from its force, is no more common among the orators whose profession calls forth the exercise of it, than in the crowd that composes society. I have searched for it in our three national assemblies, but have not found it perfect in any one person; Mirabeau himself, with the imposing magic of a noble utterance, possessed neither a winning voice nor a pronunciation the most agreeable. The Clermonts approached nearer to it.

"Where, then, was your model?" some one may ask. I shall answer, like that painter of whom it was demanded whence he borrowed the charming air with which he inspired the creations of his brush: "There, within," replied he, putting his finger to his forehead. I shall place

mine on my ears. I have frequented the theatres but seldom; I think I have discovered, however, that this accomplishment was seldom to be found there. Larive, the only actor perhaps worth citing, still left something to be desired.

When, in my early youth, I experienced the first promptings of the young woman's natural desire to please, I was startled at the sound of my own voice, and I found it necessary to modify it, in order to please myself. I imagine that the exquisite sensibility of the Greeks induced them to set a high value on everything connected with the art of speaking; I comprehend also, that Sansculottism makes us disdain these graces, and affect rather a rough brutality, equally distant from the precision of the Spartans in their language, so replete with sense, and the eloquence of the amiable Athenians.

But we left Lablancherie some time ago at Orleans; let us now make an end of this personage. On his return, a little after the death of my mother, he learned of this event on coming to see her, and manifested a degree of surprise and grief that affected and pleased me. He came afterwards to visit me; I was pleased to see

him. My father, who at first imposed upon himself the task of remaining with me when any one called, discovered that the office of a duenna was not to his taste, and that it would be more convenient for him to dismiss at the outset every one not up to his standard, and leave me to my maid and myself. He announced that he entertained thoughts of requesting Lablancherie not to return any more. I did not say a single word in reply, although I experienced some chagrin; I was occupied in figuring to myself the feelings of the discarded swain in consequence of this prohibition, and I resolved to soften it for him by delivering the injunction myself, for my father's temper made me fear that he would render it offensive. One must tell the truth; I was partial to Lablancherie, and fancied that I could love him; so far, it was an affair of the head only, I believe; but matters were progressing. I wrote, therefore, a polite letter conveying Lablancherie's dismissal, which deprived him of all hope of replying to me, but still left him free to think he was not altogether indifferent to me — if there was aught of consolation in that.

The ice once broken, this incident gave rise

to melancholy and pleasing ideas, and my happiness was not otherwise affected. Sophie came to Paris; she stayed some time with her mother and her sister Henriette, who being now more on a level with us in point of our acquired age and sedateness, became also my dear friend. The charms of her lively imagination shed their radiance everywhere, and animated the ties which she had formed.

I often repaired to the Luxembourg, with my two friends and Mademoiselle d'Hangard; I met Lablancherie there; he saluted me respectfully, and I returned the salute with some emotion.

"Then you know this gentleman?" said Mademoiselle d'Hangard, who had at first imagined the salute intended for herself.

"Yes; and do not you?"

"Oh! certainly; but I have never spoken to him. I know the Mesdemoiselles Bordenave, the younger of whom he asked in marriage."

"Is it long since?"

"A year, perhaps eighteen months; he had found means to get himself introduced into the house; he went thither from time to time, and at length offered himself. These young women

are rich, the younger is handsome; he has not a *sou*, and is in search of an heiress, for he made a similar demand in respect to another person of their acquaintance, which they heard of. They dismissed him; we call him the lover of eleven thousand virgins. How did you know him?"

"By seeing him often at Madame Lépine's concert." And I at the same time bit my lips, while I withheld the rest, greatly chagrined at having fancied myself beloved by a man who doubtless had solicited my hand merely because I was an only daughter, and still more piqued at having sent him a letter which he did not deserve. Matter for meditation in order to exercise my prudence at another opportunity!

A few months had elapsed, when a little Savoyard came one day to tell my maid that some one wanted to speak to her, I know not where: she went out, returned, and told me that M. Lablancherie had begged her to entreat me to see him. It was on a Sunday, and I expected my relations. "Yes," I replied, "let him come here immediately; since he is waiting for you near the house, go find him, and bring him with you." Lablancherie arrived: I was seated in a corner near the fire.

"I did not dare, mademoiselle, to present myself before you, after your prohibition; I was extremely desirous to speak to you, and I cannot express what I felt in consequence of the dear and cruel letter which you then addressed to me. My situation has altered since that epoch; I have projects at present with which you must not remain unacquainted."

He then unfolded to me the plan of a moral and critical work, in epistolary form, after the manner of the "Spectator," inviting me at the same time to treat some subject in this way. I allowed him to go on without interruption; I even waited after he had made a little pause, until he should have quite emptied his budget. When he had said everything, I began in my turn. I observed to him with frigid politeness that I myself had taken the trouble to request him to discontinue his visits, because the sentiments he had declared to my father respecting me made me suppose that he wished to continue them, and I was desirous to demonstrate my gratitude for this attention; that at my time of life the vivacity of the imagination mingles itself with almost all affairs, and sometimes changes the appearance of them; but that

error was not a crime, and that I had recovered from mine with too good a grace for me to trouble myself any more on that subject; that I admired his literary projects, without wishing to participate either in them, or in those of any one else; that I confined myself to wishing for the success of all the authors in the world, as well as for his, of whatever kind they might be, and that it was to tell him this I had consented to see him, in order that he might thenceforth avoid every similar attempt. After which I begged him to terminate his visit.

Surprise, grief, agitation, everything proper to such a situation, was about to be displayed. I put a stop to this by observing to Lablancherie that I was ignorant whether the Mesdemoiselles Bordenave and others, to whom he had addressed himself nearly at the same time, had expressed themselves in regard to him with an equal degree of frankness, but that mine was unbounded; and that the resolutions in consequence did not admit of any explanation.

I rose at the same time, bowed, and made that motion of the hand which indicates the door to those whom we wish to dismiss. At this moment my cousin Trude arrived; and never

did I see his rude visage with more pleasure. Lablancherie retreated in silence, and I saw him no more; but who has not since heard of "the agent-general of the correspondence of the arts and sciences?"

He off the stage, let us return to Sainte-Lette and Roland.

We had arrived at the close of the summer of 1776. I had several times seen M. Roland during the last eight or nine months. His visits were not frequent, but they were not short; just as the people who do not go out merely on purpose to show themselves at some place, but repair thither because being there affords them pleasure, stay as long as they can. His frank and instructive conversation never wearied me; and he loved to see himself listened to with attention, which I knew well how to bestow even upon people less informed than himself. This trait has perhaps gained me more friends than the faculty of delivering my own sentiments with some readiness.

I had first got acquainted with him on his return from Germany. He was then preparing for a journey into Italy; and, with that laudable love of method which characterized him,

he had left his manuscripts with me, so that I could take charge of them in case of any mishap occurring to himself. I was sincerely affected with this mark of esteem, and I received it with thanks.

On the day of his departure he dined at my father's with Sainte-Lette. On taking leave, he requested permission to embrace me; and I know not how, but this mark of politeness always puts a young woman to the blush, even when her imagination is tranquil. "You are happy in departing," says Sainte-Lette to him, with his grave and solemn voice; "but make haste to return, in order to ask for another."

During Sainte-Lette's stay in France, his friend Sévelinges became a widower. He repaired to him at Soissons, where he resided, to share his grief, and brought him to Paris in order to divert him. They visited me together. Sévelinges was fifty-two years of age; he was a gentleman of small fortune; he held a place in the finances in the province, and cultivated letters as a philosopher who knows their charms. Having thus formed an acquaintance with him, I maintained it after the departure of Sainte-Lette, who observed that

he found some pleasure on leaving France, in reflecting that his friend would not lose the advantage of my society; he even asked permission to transmit to him, in order to be returned to me after a short delay, some manuscripts which I had communicated to him.

This interesting old man embarked perhaps for the fifth or sixth time of his life. An ulcer in his head, which he had already suffered from, opened while at sea; and he arrived ill at Pondicherry, where he died, six weeks after his return. We heard of his death through Demontchery. Sévelinges regretted him exceedingly. He wrote to me from time to time; and his letters, equally abounding in agreeable description and felicities of style, afforded me great pleasure. They were tinged with that mild philosophy and melancholy sensibility, for which I always possessed a great inclination. I also have remarked what Diderot has said on this subject, and with some justice, that great taste presupposes great sensibility, and a temperament inclined to melancholy.

My father, whose good disposition had altered by degrees, objected to this display of talents at such an expense of postage. I accordingly

applied to my uncle, who authorized me to cause the letters of Sévelinges, whom he had seen at our house, to be addressed to him. My manuscripts were returned to me, accompanied by some critical observations of which I was exceedingly vain; for I had not supposed my "works" worth examination. They were in my own eyes reveries, sage enough, but trite, and relating to things which it appeared to me that every one must be acquainted with. I did not think they possessed any other merit than the singularity of having been composed by a young girl. I long preserved the most perfect indifference on my own account. The events of the Revolution, the change of affairs, the variety of my situations, the frequent comparisons with a great crowd, and with people distinguished for their merit, were all necessary, in order to make me perceive that the plane on which I stood was not encumbered with numbers. As to other points, and I hasten to make the observation, this has rather proved to me the mediocrity of my countrymen, than inspired a high idea of myself. It is not ability that is wanting; that may be found in the streets: it is correctness of judgment, and

strength of character. Without these two qualities, however, I am unable to recognize what may be termed a man. In truth Diogenes was in the right to take a lantern! But a revolution may serve instead of one: I do not know a better measure, or a more exact touchstone.

The Academy of Besançon had proposed the following question as the subject of a prize essay: "In what manner can the education of women contribute to make men better?" My imagination took wings; I seized the pen and dashed off a discourse, which I sent in anonymously, and which, as may be believed, was not judged worthy of the reward. No one attained this honor. The subject was proposed anew, I have not learned with what result, during the following year. But I recollect that, in wishing to treat on this matter, I deemed it absurd to determine on a mode of education unconnected with general manners, which depend on the government; and thought that we ought not to pretend to reform one sex by the other, but to ameliorate the species by means of good laws. Accordingly I set forth what, in my judgment, women ought to be; but I

added, that it was impossible to render them such unless in consequence of a new order of things.

This idea, certainly just and philosophical, did not meet the aim of the Academy. I reasoned on the problem instead of resolving it.

I transmitted a copy of this discourse to M. de Sévelinges, after having sent another to Besançon. Sévelinges confined his remarks solely to the style. My head had become cool; I discovered my work to be exceedingly defective in the very foundation; and I amused myself with criticising it as if it had been the production of another at which I wished to laugh heartily. This looks like tickling one's self to create a laugh, or slapping one's face by way of bringing color into the cheeks: but it is assuredly impossible to laugh by one's self with better inclination, or more innocence.

In return, Sévelinges communicated to me an academical discourse after his own fashion, on the faculty of speaking, which he had addressed to the Academy, and respecting which d'Alembert had transmitted him a flattering letter. There was, if I remember aright, much

metaphysics and a little affectation in this work.

Six months, a year, and more elapsed in this correspondence, in the course of which, however, a variety of different ideas were started. Sévelinges appeared at length to be unhappy on account of my situation, and weary of living by himself. He made many reflections on the charms of a thinking society; I deemed this extremely valuable; we reasoned a long time on the subject. I do not well know what came into his head, but he at length took a journey to Paris, and presented himself *incognito* at my father's, as if upon business. What is most diverting is, that I did not recollect him, although it was I myself who received him. But the excessively mortified air with which he left me awakened in my memory the idea of his features. It occurred to me, after his departure, that the unknown person resembled him greatly; and I was presently assured by his letters that it was really himself. This singular occurrence made a disagreeable impression on me, which I do not know how to define. Our correspondence slackened; it at length ceased, as I shall hereafter mention.

I went sometimes to Vincennes: my uncle's parsonage was very pretty, the walks were charming, his society was agreeable; but although he possessed the advantage of a housekeeper in Mademoiselle d'Hannaches, he began to find that he was obliged to pay for this by submitting to all the ill humor and folly of an old maid with great pretensions.

The castle of Vincennes was inhabited by a number of persons lodged there by the court. Here was an old censor-royal, Moreau de la Garve; there a female wit Madame de Puisieux; farther off a Countess de Laurencier; below, the widow of an officer; and so of the rest, without reckoning the king's lieutenant, Rougemont, whom Mirabeau has made known to the world, and whose pimpled face, and stupid insolence formed the most disgusting combination. A company of Invalides, the wives of whose officers composed part of the society, formed along with those I have reckoned, without counting the prisoners in the dungeons, six hundred inhabitants in the castle alone. My uncle was welcome everywhere, but he visited little and saw few people at home. But in returning from our evening walks we usually stopped at

the pavilion on the bridge belonging to the park where the ladies assembled. There I found new pictures to paint, if I had time. But the hours have wings, and my task is long; so I must pass swiftly over many things. I may, however, mention the balls in the *allée des Voleurs;* the follies of Seguin, treasurer of the Duke of Orleans, whose *fête* they celebrated with illuminations, and who became a bankrupt soon after; the forest rambles, and the lovely view in the upper park beside the Marne, to gain which we passed through a breach in the wall; those wooden figures of hermits, so picturesquely placed in the church, where there was also a picture as good in execution as it was grotesque in subject, and which represented thousands of devils who were engaged in tormenting the damned in as many different ways; my readings with my uncle, especially of the tragedies of Voltaire; our concerts after supper, when, on the newly-cleared table, a pair of muff boxes did duty as a music-stand for the good Canon Bareux who (in spectacles) droned away dismally on his bass-viol, while I scraped the violin, and my uncle made a pretence of accompanying us on his flute. Ah! perhaps

I may revisit some day those peaceful scenes, if they permit me to live. But I must now return in my narrative to Paris, — first, however, saying a word or two of a certain boaster who had gained some reputation. . . .[1]

[1] See Madame Roland's foot-note on the following page.

SKETCH

OF WHAT REMAINS TO BE NARRATED TO SERVE AS A CLOSING SUPPLEMENT TO MY PRIVATE MEMOIRS.[1]

THE manuscripts which M. Roland left in my care during the eighteen months he passed in Italy, made me better acquainted with him than frequent visits would have done. They comprised travels, reflections, plans of works, personal anecdotes; and a strong mind, incorruptible honesty, knowledge, and taste were evinced throughout.

Born amidst opulence and of a family distinguished in the law for its probity, he had while

[1] I ended my last chapter at Vincennes. I was about to speak of Carricioli, whom I met at the Canon's, and whose "Letters," signed "Ganganelli," have met with some success, although they are largely repetitions of passages in the numerous little books from his hand. But had I thus followed the course of events, step by step, I should have undertaken a work which I shall not be allowed to live long enough to finish. Therefore I confine myself to a Sketch.

still young seen its fortunes decline through disorder on one side and extravagance on the other. The youngest of five brothers, and like them destined for the church, he had left home at nineteen to avoid taking orders or engaging in commerce, to which he was no less averse. Arriving at Nantes he established himself there with a ship-owner, to gain an insight into affairs and with the view of going out to India. A sudden hemorrhage, which forbade a long sea-voyage, upset this plan. He repaired to Rouen, where a relative, M. Goudinot, inspector of manufactures, proposed to him to enter that branch of the administration. He determined to comply, and, soon distinguishing himself by his activity and industry, at length found himself advantageously settled.

Travel and study divided his time and occupied his life. Before setting out for Italy he had brought to my father's his favorite brother, a Benedictine, then prior of Clugny at Paris. He was a gifted man of gentle manners and amiable character. He came sometimes to see me, and to read to me the notes his brother had transmitted to him; for as he travelled, he committed his observations to paper. These

are the notes which on his return he converted into letters and caused to be published, entrusting the printing of them to some friends at Dieppe, one of whom, enamored of Italian, evinced his respect to the passages in that language, by multiplying them. This work, which is replete with matter, only wants to be better digested to hold the first rank of all books of Italian travel.[1] To issue a new and correct edition was one of our projects since our union; but I also wished to see Italy; time and events have carried us elsewhere.

On the return of M. Roland, I found a friend; his gravity, his manners, his habits, wholly consecrated to literary labors, made me consider him as it were without sex, or as a philosopher who existed by reason only. A sort of confidence established itself between us; and in consequence of the pleasure which he experienced in my company, he contracted by degrees the desire of visiting me oftener than before. It was near five years that I had been

[1] This book, published under the title "Letters written from Switzerland, Italy, Sicily, and Malta in 1776, 1777, 1778," is pronounced by Michelet the best one on its subject produced in France during the eighteenth century.

acquainted with him, when he made a declaration of tender sentiments. I was not insensible to this, because I esteemed his person more than that of any other man I had hitherto known, but I realized that neither he himself nor his family were altogether suitable to me or to mine in respect to external appearances. I told him frankly that his courtship did me honor, and that I would consent with pleasure, but that I did not think myself a good match for him; I then disclosed to him without reserve the state of our affairs: we were ruined. I had saved, through demanding an account from my father, at the risk of experiencing his hatred, five hundred *livres* of yearly income, which, with my wardrobe, formed the remnant of that apparent affluence in which I had been brought up.

My father was young; his errors might induce him to contract debts which his inability to discharge would render dishonorable: he might make an unfortunate marriage, and add to these evils children who would bear my name in misery, etc. I was too proud to expose myself to the ill-will of a family which would not deem itself honored by my alliance,

or to the generosity of a husband, who on my part would find nothing but objects of vexation; I advised M. Roland in the same manner as a third person would have done, and endeavored to dissuade him from thinking of me. He persisted; I was affected, and I consented that he should take the necessary steps with my father; but, preferring to express himself in writing, he was resolved to broach the matter by letter on his return to the place of his residence; and during the remainder of his stay in Paris we saw each other daily. I considered him as the being to whom I was about to unite my destiny, and I became attached to him.

As soon as he had returned to Amiens, he wrote to my father to explain his wishes and designs. My father found the letter dry; he did not like M. Roland's stiffness, and liked ill to have for his son-in-law an austere man, whose looks appeared to him to be those of a censor; he replied with harshness, impertinence, and showed the whole to me, but not until he had sent off his answer. I instantly came to a resolution. I informed M. Roland, that the event had but too well justified my

fears in respect to my father; that I would not occasion him further mortifications, and I begged him to abandon his project. I declared to my father what his conduct had obliged me to do. I added that after this, he need not be astonished if I entered into a new situation, and retired to a convent. But as I knew he had some pressing debts, I gave him the portion of plate that appertained to me, to satisfy them; I hired a little apartment at the Congregation, and retreated thither, firmly resolved to limit my wants by my means. I did so.

I could detail some interesting particulars respecting a situation in which I began to call forth the resources of a strong mind. I nicely calculated my expenditure, laying aside something for presents to the servants of the house. Potatoes, rice, and kidney-beans, stewed in a pot with a few grains of salt and a bit of butter, varied my food and my cookery, without consuming much of my time. I went out twice a week, once to visit my old relations, and again to repair to my father's, where I cast an eye over his linen and carried away what wanted mending. The rest of the time, inclosed within my roof of snow, as I called it (for I lodged

near to heaven, and it was winter), without wishing to form any acquaintance with the boarders, I resigned myself to study. I fortified my heart against adversity by deserving happiness, and I avenged myself on that fortune which refuses to grant it. The loving Agathe spent half an hour with me every evening; the sweet tears of friendship accompanied the effusions of her heart. A turn in the garden during the hours when everybody had retired, formed my solitary walk; the resignation of a sage mind, the peace of a good conscience, the elevation of a character that defies misfortune, those laborious habits that make the hours fly so swiftly away, that delicate taste of a sound understanding which finds, in the sentiments of existence and the idea of its own value, indemnifications unknown to the vulgar: such were my treasures. I was not always free from melancholy; but this had its charms; and if I was not happy, I had within my own bosom all that was necessary to be so; I could pride myself in knowing how to do without what I wanted in other respects.

M. Roland, astonished and afflicted, continued to write to me, as a man who did not cease to

love me, but who had been hurt by the conduct of my father: he returned at the end of five or six months, and was inflamed at seeing me at the grating, where I however retained the countenance of prosperity. He wished me to leave this inclosure, offered his hand to me anew and pressed me through his brother the Benedictine to accept it. I reflected profoundly on what I ought to do. I did not dissemble that a man less than forty-five years of age would not have waited several months to try to prevail upon me to change my resolution, and I readily allowed that this idea had reduced my sentiments to a state in which there was no illusion.

I considered on the other hand, that this offer, so maturely reflected upon, ought to convince me that I was respected, and that if Roland had overcome his dread of the incidental vexations which my alliance might produce, I was so much the more assured of an esteem, which I should not have any difficulty in justifying. In fine, if marriage was, as I believed it to be, a stringent tie, an association in which the wife usually charges herself with the happiness of two individuals, would it not be better

for me to exercise my faculties and my courage in this honorable task, than in the retirement in which I lived?

I might here, I think, detail some very sage reflections which determined my conduct; for as yet I have not mentioned all those which the circumstances could have suggested, but those only which experience permits me to perceive. . . . 'At' length[1] I became the wife of a man of genuine worth, who loved me more in proportion as his knowledge of me increased. Married thus with my own full consent, I found nothing to make me repent of the step; I devoted myself to him with a zeal perhaps more ardent than discreet. Considering only the happiness of my partner, I saw that he lacked something for the completion of mine. I have not for a moment ceased to behold in my husband one of the most estimable of men, to whom I deem it an honor to belong; but I have often been sensible of a certain lack of parity between us, and felt that the ascendency of a somewhat masterful character, added to twenty years of seniority, rendered one of these superiorities too great. If we had lived in soli-

[1] February 4, 1779.

tude, I should have had many disagreeable hours to pass; had we mingled much in the world I might have been loved by some whose affection, as I have learned, might touch me too deeply; I plunged, therefore, into work with my husband — an excess which also had its drawbacks, since he soon grew so accustomed to my aid as to be unable to dispense with it.

The first year of my marriage was spent at Paris, whither Roland was called by the Intendants of Commerce, who wished to enact new regulations of manufactures — measures which he strenuously opposed as colliding with those principles of freedom of trade which he advocated. He had printed the description of certain processes, which he had drawn up for the Academy; and he revised his Italian manuscripts. I acted as his secretary and corrected his proofs. I performed these tasks with a humility that I cannot help smiling at when I recollect it, and which was incongruous enough in a mind so cultivated as mine; but it proceeded from the heart. I revered my husband so frankly that I supposed he knew everything better than myself; and I so dreaded to see a cloud upon his brow, and he was so set in his

opinions, that it was not until long afterwards that I gained assurance enough to contradict him.

I was then taking a course in Botany and Natural History; those were the recreations with which I relieved my labors as housewife and secretary; for, living in a *hôtel garni,* since our home was not at Paris, and perceiving that my husband's delicate health did not accommodate itself to all kinds of cookery, I took it upon myself to prepare such dishes as suited him best.

We spent four years at Amiens, where I acted as mother and nurse, without ceasing to share the labors of my husband, who had undertaken a considerable portion of the new Encyclopædia. We seldom quitted our study but for a ramble in the suburbs. I formed a herbarium of Picardy, and the study of aquatic botany gave place to *L'Art du Tourbier.* His frequent illnesses made me uneasy for Roland; my constant care of him had its results, and this proved a new tie between us. He loved me the more for my devotion, I him for the services I had rendered.

He had met while in Italy a young man

whose amiable disposition had greatly attracted him, and who had returned with him to France, where he had taken up the study of medicine, and become our intimate friend." This was Lanthenas, whom I should esteem more to-day, had not the Revolution, that touchstone of men, by pushing him forward upon the scene, disclosed his mediocrity and feebleness of character. He had private virtues, without exterior attractions; he was perfectly suited to my husband, and was deeply attached to us. I loved him, treated him as a brother, and conferred that name upon him. For a long time his devotion, his zeal for the right, did not flag. During my husband's second ministry, his courage, now first put to the proof, gave way before the increasing storms of the Revolution. He wished to steer safely between the two extremes of opinion; his views assumed a new tinge; too humane to sanction the ferocity of the Mountain, he lacked courage to cast his lot frankly with us. He affected to stand poised between the Right, whose "passions" he deprecated, and the Left, whose "excesses" he could not approve; he was less than nothing, for he earned the contempt of both sides.

During our stay at Amiens, Sophie was married to the Chevalier de Gomicourt, who lived *en fermier* on his estate six leagues from the town. Henriette, who had been partial to Roland, to whom her family had wished to see her united, heartily approved of his preference for me, thus showing the touching sincerity that adorned her character and that generosity of soul which makes her beloved. She married the aged de Vouglans, a widower of seventy-five, who had been advised by his confessor and his physician to take another wife. Both sisters are now widows. Sophie has again grown devout; and her frail health causes apprehension for a life so necessary to her two fine children. Our essential disparity of temperament and opinions and our long separation have relaxed without altogether dissolving our connection. The frank Henriette, impulsive and warm-hearted as of old, has visited me in my captivity, and would have taken my place, to procure my safety.

Roland desired shortly after our marriage that I should see these dear friends of mine as little as possible. I complied with his wishes, and I did not feel free to visit them until time

had inspired him with confidence enough in me to remove all uneasiness on the score of rivalry in affection. It was ill-judged in him. Marriage is a grave and solemn matter; if you deprive a woman of sensibility of the pleasures of friendship with persons of her own sex, you diminish an aliment necessary to her, and expose her to temptation. How many consequences flow from this truth! . . .

We repaired to the *généralité* of Lyons in 1784, settling at Villefranche on the paternal estate of M. Roland, where his mother still lived, together with his eldest brother, the canon and counsellor. I might paint here a number of pictures of the life and manners of a little town and their influence; of the domestic jars and vexations of a life spent with a woman venerable through her years and terrible through her temper, and with two brothers of whom the younger had the passion of liberty, the elder of dominion.

During two of the winter months we resided at Lyons, which I know well, and of which I could say much. A city superbly built and situated, then flourishing in commerce and manufactures, interesting through its antiqui-

ties and collections, famed for riches of which even the Emperor Joseph was envious, and which constituted it so splendid a capital; to-day a vast tomb of victims of a government a hundredfold more atrocious than the despotism upon whose ruins it is reared.

We went to the country in the autumn, and on the death of my mother-in-law, Madame de la Platière, spent the greater part of the year there. The Parish of Thézée, two leagues from Villefranche, where the Clos de la Platière is situated, is arid of soil, but rich in vines and woods; it is the last vine-growing region before the high mountains of Beaujolais. There my simple tastes turned to the details of rural economy and benefactions; there I applied, for the relief of my neighbors, my little stock of medical lore; I became the physician of the village, so much the more beloved because I gave succor instead of levying tribute, while the pleasure of being useful made my cares a labor of love.

How readily does the countryman open his heart to the one who does him good! I do not pretend to say that these good folks felt themselves bound to me, but they loved me;

and my absence was always bewailed with tears. I had many pleasant experiences, the good women sometimes coming three or four leagues for me, with a horse, to beg me to go to the rescue of some sufferer who had been given up by the doctor. In 1789 I saved from death my husband, who had been stricken with a painful malady from which the prescriptions of the physicians would scarcely have saved him but for my superintending care. I passed twelve days without sleep, and six months in the anxieties of a perilous convalescence, yet I was not even once indisposed; so much does courage confer strength and augment our activity.

The Revolution ensued and inflamed us; friends of humanity, adorers of liberty, we believed that it would regenerate the species, and destroy the disgraceful misery of that unfortunate class at whose lot we had so often been affected; we received the intelligence with rapture. Our opinions gave offence at Lyons to many individuals, who, being habituated to commercial calculations, could not conceive how any one should be induced out of mere philosophy, to provoke and applaud changes which

could prove useful only to others. They became from this idea alone the enemies of M. Roland; thenceforward others prized him the more. He was made a member of the municipality on its first formation; he distinguished himself by his inflexible justice; he was feared, and calumny on one side took the field, while on the other, affection or impartiality defended him.

Deputed in the interests of that city to the Constituent Assembly, he repaired to Paris; we passed nearly a year there. I have mentioned elsewhere how we became acquainted with certain members of that Assembly, and connected ourselves naturally with those who, like us, did not love liberty on their own account, but hers, and who with us at present partake the lot common to almost all her founders and to humanity's true friends, such as Dion, Socrates, Phocion, and so many others of antiquity, and Barneveldt and Sidney in modern times.

»My husband had induced me to visit England in 1784, and Switzerland in 1787. I have known many interesting personages in those two countries; we kept up a correspondence with several. I have again heard within less

than a year from Lavater,[1] that celebrated pastor of Zurich, known by his writings, his brilliant imagination, his affectionate heart, and the purity of his morals. The honest and learned Gosse of Geneva will assuredly sigh at the persecution we experience. I know not what has become of the able Dezach, lately occupied in travelling through Germany, and formerly professor at Vienna, whom I often saw at London. Roland tilted with him at the house of Banks, the president of the Royal Society, where he assembles the learned of his own country, and the foreigners residing in London.

I experienced during my travels that pleasure and advantage which result from the company of a man already conversant with the places visited, and I remarked on and communicated to paper those circumstances that made the greatest impression. I also visited several parts of France: the Revolution has prevented our travels in the southern districts, and the journey to Italy, of which I entertained the desire and the hope.

[1] Lavater, it is recorded, on meeting Roland at Zurich, warmly exclaimed, "You reconcile me, monsieur, to French travellers."

BUZOT

FROM THE PORTRAIT WORN BY MADAME ROLAND IN PRISON

Engrossed by public affairs, they occupied all our ideas; they have swallowed up all our projects; we resigned ourselves wholly to the passion of serving our country. It has been seen in the former part (First Administration) [1] how Roland was called to the ministry, as it were without his own knowledge; and his public conduct cannot fail to demonstrate to impartial posterity his disinterestedness, his attainments, and his virtues.

My father, whom we had no reason to praise, neither contracted a marriage, nor any other very burdensome engagement; we paid his few debts, settled upon him an annuity, and prevailed on him to retire from business. In spite of the troubles his errors had brought upon him (and they had occasioned among other things the dissipation of my grandmother's small property), and although he had every reason to applaud our proceedings, he was nevertheless too proud not to chafe at being thus indebted to us. This state of irritation, rooted in self-love, prevented him sometimes from being just even to those who aimed only at making him happy; he died, upwards of

[1] Madame Roland refers to her "Historical Notes."

sixty years of age, during the severe winter of 1787–8, in consequence of a catarrh with which he had been long troubled.

My dear uncle expired at Vincennes, in 1789; soon after this, we also lost the dearly beloved brother of my husband. He made the tour of Switzerland in company with us, and had become prior and rector of Longpont; he was chosen an elector of his canton, where he preached liberty, as he practised the evangelical virtues; the lawyer and physician of his parishioners, and too wise for a monk, he was persecuted by the ambitious of his own order, and suffered greatly from their persecutions, which accelerated his death. Thus everywhere, and in all times, the good succumb; they have therefore another world in which they are to revive, and in which they will not suffer the penalty attached to being born in this.

Blind calumniators! follow Roland close, sift his life, analyze mine; consult the societies in which we have lived, the towns where we have resided, the country, in which there is no dissimulation; examine . . . The more nearly you survey us the more you will be vexed; that is why you wish to annihilate us.

Roland has been reproached with soliciting letters of nobility: behold the truth. His family long possessed its privileges, in consequence of employments, which however did not render them hereditary, and the opulence which supported its attributes — coats of arms, chapel, livery, fief, etc. This opulence disappeared; it was succeeded by a genteel mediocrity, and Roland had the prospect of ending his days in a domain, the sole one remaining in his family, and which still appertains to his elder brother. He thought that he possessed a right, in consequence of his labors, to insure to his descendants an advantage which his ancestors had enjoyed, and which he would have disdained to purchase.

In consequence of this, he presented his claims in order to obtain letters recognising his nobility, or ennobling him. This was at the commencement of 1784; I do not know the man who at that epoch, and in his situation, would have deemed it discreditable to have done as much. I repaired to Paris, and soon saw that the new superintendents of commerce, jealous of his seniority in a branch of the administration he was better acquainted with than

themselves, and opposing him in opinions relative to the liberty of commerce which he defended with vigor, while they gave him the requisite attestations respecting his labors, which indeed they could not refuse, did not display that zeal which insures success. I thought best therefore to abandon the project; and I pushed my suit no further. It was then that, learning the changes of which I have made mention in the curious article of Lazowski, I demanded and obtained the removal of Roland to Lyons, which brought him nearer to his family, and to a place where I knew that he would at length be desirous to retire. Patriots of the day, who stood in need of the Revolution to become something, adduce your labors, and dare to compare them.

Thirteen years spent in different places, in unremitting toil, with connections extremely varied, and of which the latter part appertains so particularly to the history of the day, would furnish materials for the fourth and most interesting section of my "Memoirs." The detached pieces which will be found in my "Portraits and Anecdotes," will serve in its stead. I know not any longer how to guide my pen

amidst the horrors that devour my country: I cannot live above its ruins; I choose rather to bury myself under them. Nature, open thy bosom!

At thirty-nine years of age.

DETACHED NOTES

IF I had been permitted to live, I should have been actuated but by one desire: this would have been to draw up the annals of the age, and become the Macaulay[1] of my country. I have been seized in my prison with a real passion for Tacitus: I cannot now sleep without having read some passages of his works. It appears to me that we see things in the same light; and with time, and on a subject equally rich, it might not have been impossible for me to imitate him.

I am very sorry to have lost, along with my "Historical Notes," a certain letter which I wrote to Garat on the sixth of June. On his being intrusted with my protestations against my detention, he sent me in return a flattering letter of four pages, in which he expressed all

[1] Catharine Macaulay, who died in 1791, and whose "History of England" Madame Roland seems to have much admired.

his esteem, grief, etc. He at the same time treated of public affairs, and strove to impute their own ruin to the twenty-two, as if they had acted and spoken in the Assembly in a manner little conformable to the interests of the commonwealth. I urged cogent arguments to Garat in reply, the harsh expression of which I regret: I depicted to him his own conduct as the offspring of that pusillanimity to which I attribute our evils — a weakness shared by a timid majority that obeyed only the impulse of its own fear. I demonstrated to him that he and Barère were calculated to ruin all the states in the world and dishonor themselves by their indirection.

I have never been able to prevail upon myself to discuss the silly declamations of this pack of dunces against what they term the "passions" of the Right. Men of probity, firm in their principles, and penetrated with a just indignation against crimes, forcibly exert themselves in opposition to the perversity of a few ruffians and the atrocious measures which they dictate; and these eunuchs in politics reproach them with speaking too warmly!

Roland has been blamed for leaving the min-

istry, after declaring that he would brave every storm. They have not discerned that it was necessary for him to show his own resolution that he might encourage the feeble, and that it was thus that he encouraged them on the sixth of January; but the sentence of Louis XVI. pronounced on the eighteenth, demonstrated the minority of wise men and the loss of their dominance in the convention. There was no longer any hope of support in that body, and he withdrew rather than be the accomplice of folly.

Truly, Roland hated tyranny, and he believed Louis guilty; but he wished to insure liberty, and he believed it lost when bad men had gained the ascendency. He is but too well justified, as are those whom they are to-day conducting to death![1] This I think I have demonstrated in my narrative of the Second Administration of Roland.[2] His leaving the government was the signal of its downfall, as he had himself foreseen.

My poor Agathe! she has flown from her

[1] October 31, 1793, the day of the Girondists' execution. The lines above were thus penned within eight days of the writer's own death on the scaffold.

[2] "Historical Notes."

cloister without ceasing to be a mourning dove; for she weeps now for her "daughter," as she calls me. Alas, there are many persons whose fortunes might have been interwoven in the continuation of my story: that good cousin Desportes who died at the age of fifty, after many sorrows; the little cousin Trude, now living in the country; my faithful old servant, "Mignonne," who died at my father's, passing away in my arms with the utmost serenity, and saying with her last breath: "Mademoiselle, I have never begged but one thing of heaven: it was to die with you; and now I am content."

MADAME ROLAND'S FAREWELL

(*From her "Dernières Pensées"*)

. . Farewell, my dear child, my worthy husband, my faithful servant, and my good friends; farewell, thou sun, whose resplendent beams used to shed serenity over my soul while they recalled it to the skies; farewell, ye solitary fields whose sight has so often called forth soft emotions; and you, ye rustic inhabitants of Thézée, who were wont to bless my presence, whom I attended in sickness, whose toil I lightened, and whose penury I relieved, farewell; farewell peaceful retreats, where I have enriched my mind with moral truths, and learnt in the stillness of meditation to govern my passions and to despise the vanity of the world.

EDITOR'S NOTE

MADAME ROLAND'S recital was cut short and her fate was foreshadowed by her removal, on Nov. 1, to the Conciergerie. At the examination of the witnesses

against her on the two following days little was elicited beyond the already familiar fact that the Girondins were her friends and had frequented her house. To lend a show of legality to her condemnation it was necessary to adduce evidence connecting her with the armed uprisings in the Departments that had followed the expulsion of the Girondins from the Convention. Such evidence was alleged by the public accuser to be contained in certain letters and written messages that had passed between her and the fugitive deputies Barbaroux and Buzot, who were stirring up resistance to the Jacobin rule at Caen. As a matter of fact, the passages from the letters cited in court, while they implied Madame Roland's approval of the attempts at Caen and elsewhere to foment a Departmental revolt against the Mountain, were essentially nothing more than general expressions of mutual sympathy and regard between friends in misfortune. But the Indictment declared that: "After the contents of said letters, there can be no doubt that the above wife of Roland was one of the principal aiders and abettors of the conspiracy." The fact that the wife of Roland was a helpless prisoner in Sainte Pélagie at the time when the letters were written did not count in the opinion of a court bent on the destruction of a political foe; and a verdict was promptly found in accord with the demands of the Indictment. The death warrant set forth and decreed:

"That there has existed a horrible conspiracy against the unity and indivisibility of the Republic, the liberty and safety of the French people.

"That Marie Jeanne Phlipon, wife of Jean Marie Roland, is convicted of being one of the aiders or accomplices of that conspiracy.

"That the Tribunal, after having heard the public accuser deliver his reasons concerning the application of the law, condemns Marie Jeanne Phlipon, wife of Jean Marie Roland, ex-minister, to the punishment of death, in conformity with the law of Dec. 16, 1792, which has been read, and which is conceived in these terms: 'The National Convention decrees, that whoever shall propose or attempt to destroy the unity of the French Republic, or to detach its integral parts in order to unite them to a foreign territory, shall be punished with death.'"

"Such," said Bosc, Madame Roland's friend and literary trustee, "was the sentence that sent to the scaffold, at thirty-nine years of age, a woman whose energetic disposition, feeling heart, and cultivated mind, rendered her the delight of all who knew her. . . . Citizeness Roland did not at the end deceive the expectation of her friends. She went to the guillotine with all the serenity of a lofty mind superior to the idea of death, and possessing sufficient powers to overcome the natural horror of dissolution."

Madame Roland's execution must be regarded as an act of political vengeance, pure and simple. For an account of her imprisonment, her last days, and

her bearing in the hour of supreme trial, the reader is referred to the Introduction to this volume.

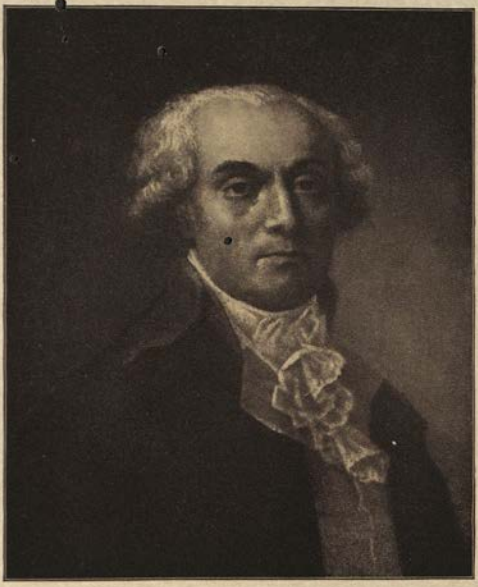
Roland refused to long survive his wife. When the news of her death reached him, he left his hiding-place at Rouen, and set out on foot for Paris, with the intention of appearing before the Convention, denouncing its misdeeds, and securing a release from his sorrows on the scaffold. But, on reaching Baudoin, four leagues from Rouen, his strength failed him, or his purpose changed. Turning aside from the highway, the stricken old man entered an avenue leading to a private house, and there, at the foot of a tree, drew the blade from his sword-cane, and stabbed himself to the heart. On his body was found this writing:

"Whoever thou art that findest me lying here, respect my remains. They are those of a man who devoted his life to useful works, and who has died as he lived, virtuous and honest. . . . Not fear, but indignation made me quit my retreat, on learning that my wife had been murdered. I did not choose to remain longer in a land polluted with crimes."

Even more tragic was the fate of Buzot, the man whom (as the world now knows) Madame Roland loved, and who was the long mysterious object of that exalted and passionate farewell addressed in her last writings to one "I dare not name, to one whom the most terrible of passions has not induced to overstep the barriers of virtue." Buzot, tracked from

place to place by the Jacobin emissaries, after the triumph of the Convention, came finally to Saint Emilion, where, with Pétion, he lay for three months in hiding. But the Bordeaux authorities, roused to sudden vigilance, were soon hot on the trail of the outlaws, and they were once more forced to take to the open country. What they did and suffered during that last flight is not known; but after a few days the body of Buzot was found, beside that of Pétion, in a wheat-field, half-eaten by wolves.

Thus perished the last and youngest of the unhappy trio of political dreamers, victims of the Revolution which they and their friends had helped to found, sought to purify, and were unable to control.



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